1052

THE LIFE AND CHARACTER OF THOMAS LETCHWORTH,

A MINISTER OF THE GOSPEL AMONG THE PEOPLE CALLED QUAKERS.

By WILLIAM MATTHEWS.

Happy is the man that findeth Wisdom.

Prov. iii. 13.

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57

BRITISH
MUSEUM

TO THE SURVIVING OLD ACQUAINTANCE OF THAT INVALUABLE MAN, WHOSE LIFE AND CHARACTER ARE BRIEFLY DELINEATED IN THE FOLLOWING PAGES.

MY DEAR FRIENDS!

AS the memory of the JUST is said to be bleſſed, and the RIGHTEOUS to be had in the heavenly diſtinction of everlaſting remembrance; no advantage can reſult TO THEM from any written memorial amongſt the children of mortality. But ſince the wiſdom and the faith of the wiſe and good may be ſet down as mementos in the way to Zion, I have been emboldened to this little tribute of affection and good-will.

The ends of this undertaking might have been more fully anſwered, had the work fallen to the execution of a more able hand—although a more willing mind could ſcarcely have been employed in it.

Such

Such as it is, however deficient in the requisite graces, excepting that of TRUTH, it is submitted, as I trust, with all proper humility, to the publick in general, and particularly to you,

By your affectionate,

well-wishing friend,

The AUTHOR.

Bath, 1 *Month*, 1786.

THE

THE

LIFE

OF

THOMAS LETCHWORTH.

TO become the biographer of a deceaſed friend, endeared by long acquaintance and habits of affectionate intercourſe, is at once a painful and a pleaſing taſk: for while the tender ſenſibility of the mind is ſtrongly awakened at the commencement of ſuch an undertaking, it is ſtill a pleaſant reflection, that we are attempting thereby to perpetuate the memory of thoſe qualities which were the objects of our love and eſteem.

The man who is to be the ſubject of the following pages, was one concerning whom it may be difficult to ſay too little or too much; for while his character was ſufficiently known, by

a numerous acquaintance, to render information and eulogium neceſſary, it will be no eaſy taſk to ſay enough of his perſonal qualities, and his virtues as a Chriſtian, to fill up the meaſure of truth, and of uſefulneſs to poſterity.

The proper order of ſuch a treatiſe as the preſent, requires, that I ſhould begin with thoſe days of infancy, which preceded not only my own knowledge of my Friend, but my own exiſtence. The firſt part of his life, therefore, muſt be briefly related from the information of others; at leaſt in ſome particulars, wherein his own occaſional account of himſelf hath not afforded ſufficient materials. But I can fully depend on the authenticity of my information.

He was the third ſon of Robert and Elizabeth Letchworth, and was born at Woodbridge in Suffolk, where they reſided, in the year 1739. In or about the year 1755, Robert Letchworth removed from the country, for a final ſettlement with his family in London; having for ſome time, between this event and the birth of his ſon Thomas, been reſident in the city of Norwich; which circumſtance I mention here for a reaſon that will occur in its proper place.

The

Robert Letchworth, it is well known, was a man of an induſtrious, inoffenſive, and virtuous character; who for the laſt forty-eight years of his life was a uſeful and valuable miniſter among the Quakers; and attained to the age of eighty-eight. He departed this life in the neighbourhood of London, in the laſt month of the year 1782; and left behind him a name, for integrity, and ſimplicity of manners, which added honour to the venerable diſtinction of old age.

His wife, Elizabeth Letchworth, was no leſs remarkable for maternal virtues, and a long ſeries of careful attentions in domeſtic life. She died about eighty years old, only a few days before her ſon, the intereſting ſubject of theſe pages; —and the ſame day was rendered remarkable to his ſurviving relations and friends, by her burial and his expiration!

Thoſe ancient parents had eight other children, moſt if not all of whom lived to be men and women;—and it will be at leaſt excuſed, if I record it to their honour, that notwithſtanding this large family, and their having the difficulties of ſmall property, and material diſappointments to encounter, which occaſioned their changing the place of their reſidence ſeveral times in the courſe of their lives; yet ſuch

was their frugality and induſtry through life, that they were enabled not only to leave the world without owing it any thing, but to ſubſiſt, through their laſt infirmities, on the fruits of their induſtry and care.

Thomas Letchworth was placed, for the latter part of the time of his education, under the care of Joſeph Dancer, a ſchool-maſter in the county of Hertford; where, as well as by future efforts, he made ſome progreſs both in the Latin and French tongues. But it ſeems probable, that the natural vivacity of his genius was leſs favourable to the drudgery of grammatical ſtudies, than the more prompt and ingenious exerciſes of the imagination and the judgment. Hence it might be, that though he was afterwards far from being deficient, even in the qualifications of a critick, in the accurate conſtruction of language, he ſhined, as a man of learning, far more in the walks of philoſophy than of letters. This ſeems not improper to be mentioned as a conſtituent part of a true character of my friend; but in juſtice to the more excellent parts of that character, we muſt preſerve a lively remembrance of one truth, That from his early years, to the cloſe of his memorable life, he ſhined moſt of all as an intelligent, well-informed, and liberal-minded Chriſtian.

Chriſtian. Nor will it be a circumſtance unſuitable to the gravity of theſe memoirs, to be here related of him, that his very tender years, while he reſided at Norwich, were marked by the dawning of a genius, which ſeems to have been deſtined to ſhine with unuſual luſtre in the province of the Goſpel Miniſtry. And I am indebted to that nearneſs of affection which ſubſiſted between him and me, and to that innocent pleaſantry which he was ſometimes wont to indulge among his intimate friends, for a piece of information which was equally pleaſant and remarkable.

He was no ſooner capable, by the early ripening of his mental faculties, of conſidering his important relationſhip to his great Creator, than his thoughts became uncommonly engaged to a ſerious contemplation of the preſent and ultimate allotment of good men. And ſo ſtrong were his ſenſations reſpecting creative goodneſs and mercy, that he was often induced to wander, contemplatively alone, on the Caſtle-hill at Norwich, and among the tombs of that city: and though the activity of his mind, and the ſociability of his diſpoſition, led him to the common little friendſhips and aſſociations of infantile days, yet were thoſe attachments of a ſingular complexion; for even in childiſh re-

creations with his little fellow-citizens, and eſpecially in ſummer evenings, he found a ſtrong propenſity to draw the attention of his play-mates from levity to ſerious ſubjects and ſuperior ſpheres. Hence, about the ſeventh or eighth year of his age, it was no uncommon thing for him to mount a tomb-ſtone, and harangue on the beauty of the ſtarry heavens, and deſcant on ſome figurative paſſage of ſcripture; exhorting his auditory to be good, and to love that GOD who made thoſe heavens; announcing, according to his warm conception, the rewards of a virtuous life:—that the Almighty would cauſe his bleſſing to come upon all good children; make them happy men and women in this world, and after death transform them to the lights of heaven, and make them ſhine amongſt thoſe ſtars for ever and ever.

It will not, moreover, be inconſiſtent with the deſign of one who writes with a view to profit a riſing generation, and animate young perſons to the remembrance of their Creator in the days of their youth, to ſay, that the before-mentioned little circumſtances, and the reverent frame of mind that produced them, were not merely the enjoyments of childhood. I have been ſtruck, and much delighted with that apparent

parent pleaſure, with which they were remembered and mentioned, in the ſtrength and vigour of life, by a man of the firſt rank for reflection and ſuſceptibility of good. "I cannot," ſaid he, "even now, forget the pleaſantneſs of what "I then felt; it always gives me a ſtrong plea- "ſure in the remembrance; and, I think, I "have ſeldom ſince felt more comfort from "pious reflection, than I uſed to feel in thoſe "childiſh days."

To young readers, I would take this opportunity of inculcating the laſting pleaſures and benefits of an early and fervent thoughtfulneſs on that glorious being, who hath made the heavens and the earth, the ſeas and the fountains of waters; from whom proceed, through life, all comfort, and the ſweeteſt recollections and ſenſibilities of the mind.

In our days of manhood we may poſſibly attain to more clear and correct ideas of GOD, and of the wonders of his providence, and love towards us; but the religious meditations of the morning of life will undoubtedly have an influence, truly precious—a ſweet ſavour that may never depart from us!

By thoſe of riper years may alſo be inferred, the great duty and benefit of endeavouring to impreſs on the minds of all children, to whom we have a ſuitable acceſs, the laſting advantages of an early ſerioufneſs, and practical piety. Thus thoſe who have had larger experience of good and evil, may wiſely take occaſion to conſider, likewiſe, the ſtate of their own minds, on a compariſon with former times, and the days of their firſt love, which may often lead us to the important and profitable enquiry, "Is our "ſalvation nearer than when we firſt believed?"

But not to digreſs too far:—

About the uſual time of apprenticeſhip, he was bound by his father to J. Brecknock, a ſhopkeeper at Epping. His maſter was a member of the church of England; and from information which I have received of the family, he either from motives of forward zeal, or from ignorance of the duty of a maſter in that particular, uſed much perſuaſion to detach his apprentice from the profeſſion in which he had been brought up, and to induce him to join the national church; adding promiſes of rewarding his compliance. But, though young, and much unaſſociated with others of his own perſuaſion in that town, where indeed few in the ſame

ſame profeſſion then lived, he ſtedfaſtly declined all overtures of ſuch a kind. This ſeems a remarkable proof that the main principles of his friends were early the ſubjects of his reflection, and early received the full concurrence of his judgment. For I have been alſo further informed, that he would not only aſſign to his maſter the reaſons of his partial belief and attachment, and foil him in argument, but has ſometimes been known to attend at the publick meeting-houſe of his own ſociety, when no other perſon was there, and ſpend the uſual time of worſhip in ſolitary meditation:—Thus giving as full a proof, as perhaps he could have given, of his love of retirement, and early ſatisfaction with the peculiar principle of ſilent worſhip,—a principle, and a practice, which ſeem to have made an early and ſolemn impreſſion on his mind.

During his apprenticeſhip, his taſte for reading ingenious authors, on moral and metaphyſical ſubjects, was not more remarkable than his reliſh of the ſublime doctrines of the Chriſtian religion; and he was early enamoured of that revelation which he found made of the nature and excellency of it.

As he advanced towards manhood, he alſo advanced in the love of his Maker;—in admiration

ration of the manifold evidences of his wiſdom, providence, and mercy to mankind; and thus becoming, himſelf, a recipient of that divine energy which adores with acceptance at the ſpiritual altar, he received, as he believed, an inward ſpiritual call to proclaim unto others the glad tidings of the goſpel. Under this perſuaſion, about the nineteenth year of his age, he commenced his publick miniſtry.

His firſt appearance in that character, was at Devonſhire-houſe in London, to which particular meeting of his friends he afterwards belonged for ſeveral years.

Soon after this ſolemn embarkation in the cauſe of piety and virtue, he connected himſelf in marriage with a young woman of conſiderable property, then under the guardianſhip of reſpectable perſons, who conſented to the union with full hopes of that integrity in him, which it was afterwards the uniform wiſh of his heart, through ſcenes of adverſity as well as proſperity, to maintain.

The fruit of this marriage was ſeveral children; only one of whom, a ſon of his own name, lived long enough to know him as a father. That ſon, for many years the object of his

his tender paternal ſolicitude, now remains: the object alſo of the favourable hopes of his numerous friends; many of whom cannot but indulge an affectionate wiſh, that the piety and integrity of the departed parent may be remembered with the ſolid advantage of a filial reverence; and among thoſe friends, the affectionate writer of theſe pages is one.

About the year 1762, I had firſt the happineſs, and to me the unſpeakable pleaſure, of knowing my excellent friend, though more than ſeven years elapſed before any opportunity offered of my becoming perſonally acquainted with him.

I am perſuaded I cannot ſay any thing in teſtimony to his talents as a man, and his eminent gifts and ſervices as a goſpel miniſter, that will not be anticipated, perhaps in more lively and juſt ſentiments, by many who have been his contemporaries, and who have felt alſo the ſtrength and endearment of his virtues, and the peculiar animation of his miniſtry.

With reſpect to the laſt mentioned and moſt diſtinguiſhing part of his character, as he conceived of the attributes of the Deity with reverent admiration and ſublimity, and had early a matured

a matured ſenſe of the allegiance and reverence due to the common Father of Spirits, on account of the multitude of his mercies; ſo his beginning in the miniſtry was marked by a fluency of expreſſion, and a fervor of eloquence, which can never be the produce of leſs feeling minds.

I cannot think myſelf the moſt unſuitable for the office of paying this written tribute to his memory, and attempting to delineate his character, becauſe I muſt write with the freſh and ſweet remembrance of thoſe ſenſations of good, which he was an early inſtrument of producing and enlarging in my mind. The firſt time I remember to have heard him preach, he was drawn forth in a moſt pathetic and perſuaſive manner, on a paſſage of Scripture which had affected my mind with its own ſolemnity before; but which had appeared to be more ſublime than practically teaching,—"Lift up "your heads, O ye gates,—even lift them up, "ye everlaſting doors, that the King of Glory "may come in!"

The practical application which he made to *the obedient opening the doors of the immortal minds of believers, to receive the inward bleſſing and preſence of the King of Glory, whoſe tabernacle is with the ſons of men*, accompanied, as the exhortation

exhortation was, with all the goſpel affection, and pathos becoming the ſubject, was indeed beautiful and ſublime divinity. Thoſe who knew him beſt, and whoſe minds have beſt qualified them to feel the peculiarity and divine energy of his language, will beſt judge what may have been the effect produced in the audience on that occaſion; and will alſo judge with how much ſatisfaction I could apply to him the apoſtle's deſcription,—that he was "a work-"man that needed not to be aſhamed, rightly "dividing the word of truth."

Suffice it to ſay, on my own behalf, that I can date much of the happieſt bent of my affections from that opportunity; and this I mention, not to aſcribe any improper degree of merit to a man whom I ever afterwards ſo warmly loved, (for ſtrictly ſpeaking, even the angels of the third heaven are no more to be accounted of than *ſervants)* but as a proof to me of the powerful unction which early attended the labours of him, whoſe labour, alas! is now *no more.*

Undoubtedly he was a man of like paſſions with other men; but he knew, and acknowledged them, with that humility which goes before deliverance, and that calm recollection and ſolicitude which raiſe the mind to dignity.

There

There were not wanting *ſome*, perhaps in the main pious perſons, in that early part of his life, who were forward to find out ſome trivial imperfections in his character; and, as will ever be the propenſity of human nature, to *augment* them; but he learned by the exerciſe of his own better judgment, and by attention to his own more amiable feelings, to bear that little troubleſome ſpecies of perſecution with an undaunted and chriſtian perſeverance. He was conſcious of the dignity of the faith which he had received; of the all-ſufficiency of that power whereby he had been called; and was enabled to make a ſpiritual application of that animating language of David,—"Truſt in the "LORD, and do good; ſo ſhalt thou dwell in "the land, and verily thou ſhalt be fed!" It may alſo be ſaid of him, that through all the future trials of life,—as Jacob prophetically ſaid of Joſeph, "The archers have ſhot at him," —"but his bow abode in ſtrength, and the "arms of his hands were made ſtrong, by the "hands of the mighty GOD of Jacob!"

It is no wonder that in religion, which ſerious men juſtly deem the moſt important buſineſs of life, there ſhould be in thoſe ſerious perſons, as the effect of growing habits of thinking, or perhaps particular and powerful impreſſions of fear

ſear and penitence, different ideas formed of the different degrees of thoſe attributes of the ſupreme being, by which he is ſenſibly exiſtent to us, under all our infinitely various capacities and complexions of mind.

An infinitely glorious being, by becoming the common ſubject of contemplation to finite and frail creatures, accuſtomed on almoſt every inferior ſubject to differ in opinion, muſt neceſſarily ſuffer ſuch an endleſs variety and apparent confuſion in the conception of his attributes and his will, as nothing leſs than his own infinite attribute of mercy can be ſufficient to cover. Hence, notwithſtanding the divine neceſſity of preſcribing to ſuch beings as we are, the laws of love, fear, righteouſneſs, brotherly kindneſs, mental charity, and a ſupreme reverence, which are uniform and permanent in themſelves; we may account, on obvious principles, not only for the diverſified tenets, and ſyſtems of religion, which divide the chriſtian world; but alſo for that conſtant variety of religious conception and opinion, about things and about men, which gives ſo large a ſhare of ſtanding *infirmity* to every diſtinct ſociety!

Thus the contemplative mind, while conſcious of its own ſhare in the univerſal weakneſs,

neſs, will find a motive and a ground for the moſt eaſy and happy conſtruction of that want of harmony in the different parts of the general ſyſtem, which at ſome times it cannot help lamenting. And thus a door is kept open in the intellectual temple, for the admiſſion of thoſe chriſtian graces, temperance, patience, charity, reſignation, and hope: and laſtly, the mind that is accuſtomed to look beyond the preſent imperfect ſtate, and riſe, by the love and light of the goſpel ſhed abroad in the heart, into frequent contemplations of better things, will be ſtrengthened to the meek, the perſevering performance of thoſe duties, which may appear annexed to its particular ſtation among men, as in the heart-felt ſervice of GOD, and of CHRIST.

It is, doubtleſs, from conſiderations of this ſort, that we may derive the early, ſtedfaſt, and continued exertion of thoſe rare talents, in our deceaſed friend, which, appearing at firſt in a moſt conſpicuous light, attracted the notice of all ranks of his brethren: and which ſeemed to continue in a growth unretarded by the common occurrence of caſual cenſure on the one hand, and much uninfluenced by the uncommon attachments and applauſes which he experienced on the other.

A mind

A mind formed like his, for the important inveſtigation of moral and religious cauſes and effects; gifted as his was, to dwell with ſuperior enjoyment and rapture on the beauty of the divine œconomy, and the energy of that original power and wiſdom whereby all things exiſt; and that mercy which was to him an endleſs theme of thankſgiving and praiſe; could not be expected to mingle with delight, or with ſucceſs, in the general avocations and ſervile buſineſs of common life.

Hence it ſeems to have been, that, like other men of ſuperior parts, (though often very differently employed) he was not found among the ſucceſsful in the accumulation of wealth, either by the boldneſs of avaricious enterprize, to which he had either naturally, or from reflection, no motive; or by eager attention to opportunities of gaining by other people's miſcarriages or luxury, to which he was ever ſuperior; or by unremitting aſſiduity among the ſons of worldly care and parſimony, for which province he was utterly unfit.

But thus much muſt be ſaid of him, to his laſting reputation, and for a laſting memorial of the uniformity and value of his exemplary character; that he was equally ſenſible, with

the moſt obſervant of his acquaintance, of his own unfitneſs, both from natural and religious cauſes, to conduct without danger of miſcarriage any large or laborious plan of human buſineſs; he therefore ſtudiouſly avoided to endanger himſelf, and the credit of that ſuperior cauſe in which he found his affections engaged; and diſregarding the common eſtimate of this world's reputation, he choſe, from principle, ſafety of ſtation in humility of employment.

It is a truth well known, at leaſt to thoſe particular friends who had free acceſs to his inmoſt boſom, and who knew the ſincerity of his confidence, that in his eſtimate of the good and evil of human proſperity and adverſity, he had only one motive to any degree of ſolicitude, about the poſſeſſion of more than his bare neceſſities required; and that was, the eaſy accommodation of his little family, and eſpecially his wife, ſhould it ever happen, as it hath ſince pleaſed Providence to order, that he ſhould be removed from her.

A ſyſtem of œconomy ſo moderated as his was, both from prudence and ſuperior principle, and ſo equally and conſcientiouſly adapted to the moderation of his worldly purſuits, might well

well be conſidered as claiming the approbation of all candid and good men: and perhaps, without any encroachment on the duties and generoſity of the wealthy, might be conſidered alſo as having ſome ſort of *claim* on that affectionate munificence of many of his friends, which a few years before his deceaſe ſhone out in a voluntary and conſpicuous manner, even to ſuch a generous contribution, and funded eſtabliſhment in his favour, as made his latter days completely eaſy on the ſcore of pecuniary accommodation. This noble exertion of friendſhip, among a few individuals, enabled him to leave his two near dependants very comfortably provided for. His gratitude, on that occaſion, accompanied with thankfulneſs to the good diſpoſer of all events, was cheriſhed in his warm and ſuſceptible heart, fully to the degree which might be expected from a man of his general feelings and ſenſibility of mind.

After this favourable event, which might have been conſidered by ſome (naturally prone to the love of eaſe, for the ſake of indolent gratification) as ſufficiently warranting a life of inactivity from buſineſs; he ſtill continued to give proof, that inactivity of that ſort was no deſirable object with him, when unemployed in the ſacred duties of his miniſtry:

for he continued with aſſiduity and care, a ſmall employment, as collector to one of the publick charitable inſtitutions in London, to which office he had been elected by a large majority of the governors, and to which a moderate ſalary was annexed. This office he continued to hold till his declining health obliged him to give it up.

As a literary man he wrote little, but read much. His ſtudies were principally confined to thoſe branches of knowledge, moſt immediately connected with the properties of the human mind. The operations of the will, the infinitely various influences of cauſes ariſing from nature, education, prejudice, and habit:—the effects conſequent on natural, accidental, and intereſted aſſociations of ideas, were to him a field of curioſity and obſervation, equally ſpacious and inſtructive. Neither did he thus employ himſelf from a motive of mere gratification as a ſpeculatiſt into the vaſt variety of nature, to take up a kind of learned reſt in the knowledge of the inconſiſtency and weakneſs of the human mind, as too many ancient and modern philoſophers ſeem to have done, to no better end than going down to the grave, in a wavering uncertainty about all the revealed principles of immortality and eternal life: Other, and

and far other, were the ultimate objects of his ſolicitude and belief!

Early enamoured of the ſimplicity of doctrine, and the dignity of principle, held out for the preſent enjoyment of mankind—and the future rewards annexed to a virtuous journey through this world, it was his delight to apply his obſervations, in the laborious field of his enquiries, to the correction of arrogance, error, intemperate zeal, hidden and notorious vice; and lead by leſſons of humility, penitence, and love, to an efficacious reception of thoſe truths which are the peculiar glories and conſolations of the goſpel.

From the more critical and philoſophical kinds of literature, ſo much adapted to the ſcope of his genius, and the acuteneſs of his judgment, his mind conſtantly and habitually turned for repoſe, as a traveller returning home, to the comforts of inſpiration, and the promiſes of holy writ. He had an admirable conception and reliſh for the ſublimity of the prophetic writings, and thoſe animated beauties of natural figure and deſcription, in which they ſo much abound. Hence it will appear natural, that he ſhould alſo poſſeſs in himſelf a talent

for poetical compoſition; in which province, however, he was leſs a practitioner than a judge.

About the twenty-fifth year of his age he compoſed and printed a poem, of two parts, in blank verſe, under the title of "*Morning and Evening Contemplations*; *or*, *a Deſcant on the Times*;" in which was diſcoverable a luxuriance of imagination, expreſſed in a vein of piety, which did conſiderable credit to a firſt attempt; while it diſplayed a philanthropy, and a zeal in the cauſe of religion and ſocial virtue, which evinced his principles to be fully founded in the love of GOD, and the love of men. He never reviſed this poem, though he once entertained ſome thoughts of it, and of bringing it, under the corrections of his maturer years, to another edition. But without the previous knowledge of its author, it had the diſtinction of being ſelected from the general maſs of pamphlets, and of being re-printed, in its original ſtate, at Philadelphia.

In the years 1773, 1774, and 1775, he employed himſelf in the publication of a periodical work, which came out monthly, in ſix-penny numbers, under the title of "*The Monthly Ledger*; *or*, *Literary Repoſitory*;" which, on account of

of the general affection borne to the publiſher, as well as its own moral and inſtructive tendency, met with a very conſiderable ſale; and the three octavo volumes which the work now makes, notwithſtanding an inequality of matter which every publication of that kind muſt be liable to, and a want of originality, which under the idea of an entertaining ſelection from former publications was a profeſſed part of the plan, may be conſidered as no unintereſting addition to an Engliſh library. Many papers, written by ſome of our Editor's ingenious acquaintance, as well as others which were the production of his own pen, will doubtleſs be read with deſerved approbation, and with uſefulneſs, when their authors ſhall have been numbered with him in the world of departed ſpirits!

But this employment, partly commenced for profit, and partly for the pleaſure of a favourite purſuit, was not by his friends univerſally thought the moſt eligible for one in his ſtation, as it naturally ſubjected him to the neceſſity of diſpleaſing ſome of his literary contributors, or of admitting ſallies of imagination and levity, neither ſufficiently intereſting to do that good which ſhould be the object of all moral publications, nor to increaſe the uniform

importance

importance of his own character, eſpecially in the ſacred department of the goſpel miniſtry.

He was not inſenſible of this difficulty, and in purſuance of the growing convictions of his own judgment, as well as in conformity to the advice of his friends, to whoſe candid opinions he was ever diſpoſed to be open, he brought his work to a concluſion at the end of the third volume.

In the year 1775, he alſo became the editor of another work, of great reputation and value, though only in one volume octavo, viz. "The Life and Writings of John Woolman, of Mount Holley, in the province of New Jerſey, in North America"—a ſenſible and moſt excellent man, who departed this life in the city of York in the latter part of the year 1772, while in the performance of a religious miniſterial viſit to the meetings of his friends in this nation. This was a publication, which it muſt have reflected ſome degree of honour on any ſerious man to have been concerned in, on account of the amiable and beautiful ſimplicity of ſtyle and ſentiment by which it is marked, as the effuſion of one of the moſt benevolent and truly chriſtian minds, that ever adorned human ſociety in any age or country. Our editor, therefore,

fore, could not but be highly ſenſible of the value of the work he was engaged in, and accordingly in a letter which he then wrote to a friend, concerning it, he ſtiled his author his "CHRISTIAN SOCRATES," and his works, "The good works of a good man, containing "the nobleſt and moſt rational chriſtian doc- "trines, expreſſed in good language;—the be- "nevolence that is diffuſed throughout the "whole, with the ſterling ſenſe contained in "them, will be a ſufficient recommendation to "the wiſe and worthy; for in religion he was "of no party, nor a lover of party ſpirit; but "the friend of all mankind, and a miniſter both "to Jew and Gentile, as well as to the particu- "lar little church of which he was a member."

There was in Thomas Letchworth a talent for innocent pleaſantry of expreſſion, which often mingled in ſerious ſubjects, and which, while it had a tendency to enliven his letters and converſation, was frequently found to profit the minds of his acquaintance, and leave an impreſſion of the juſtneſs of diſtinction, and the importance of truth, which a more common and rigid mode of ſpeech might have failed to do. Of this kind may be conſidered an additional remark which he made concerning the works of his excellent author:—"I have a "proſpect

"proſpect of getting ſomething handſome by "Woolman's works; which he, poor ſoul, got "nothing by, excepting *eternal life*; *that* I doubt "not he *did* get; and I pray God (more than "for money) that we may attain unto that "alſo," &c.

With this work, I believe, ended his engagements in the line of publication; and the few remaining years of his life became much devoted to the great importance of ſilent reflection, and the diſcharge of his duty as a miniſter among his friends of the meeting, and in the neighbourhood where he lived.

In that employment, his amiable and diſintereſted zeal for the promotion of general righteouſneſs, and that reverence towards GOD, and benevolence to human ſociety, which make the beauty and happineſs of the chriſtian religion, were conſpicuous to his auditory and acquaintance, and were the means of indearing to many both his labours and himſelf.

He travelled, at different periods of his life, into ſeveral parts of this nation, in the ſervice of the goſpel; having, when his concern for that work led him to viſit parts where he was leſs generally known, a certificate from his brethren

brethren at home, of his being an approved miniſter among them, and of their approbation of his travels. He was alſo, in his publick character, a frequent attender of the marriage and funeral ſolemnities of his acquaintance and friends, not only near home, but at great diſtances; for which ſervice, in large and mixed aſſemblies, he was eminently gifted. And it was obſervable of him, as a miniſter of the goſpel, that though his publick diſcourſes were always delivered with a degree of clearneſs, and pathetic illuſtration of the principles of real religion, which was adapted to edify, and influence to a greater love of virtue, every aſſembly, either mixed or ſelect, great or ſmall; yet that his qualifications generally ſhined forth moſt conſpicuouſly, when his auditory was moſt large, and conſiſted of perſons of various religious ſocieties. In proclaiming what he believed to be truth, upon ſuch occaſions, he ſeemed to loſe ſight of his connection with any *particular* ſociety of Chriſtians,—and conſidering his audience as *brethren*, eſſentially intereſted in the ſame relationſhip to the univerſal parent,—and eſſentially called, by the ſame holy calling, to love and good works; having the ſame common privileges of mercy, acceptance, and eternal life; he ſpoke the genuine language of goſpel affection, as a delegate of the univerſal ſhepherd.

He

He was not haſty in riſing to ſpeak in ſuch religious aſſemblies,—exemplifying his belief in the importance of the well-known principle of his friends, viz. a previous and collected ſilence, in order to feel, prevalent in himſelf, that abſtraction from worldly thoughts, which qualifies for the moſt beneficial conception and utterance of heavenly truths; and generally moving, in his ſacred department, under the weight of that inward qualification which no *man* can give; and on that ground of independence which looks beyond all human cenſure, jealouſy, or embarraſſment from others, he was often obſerved to riſe, in the dignity of the character, to a degree of elevation and authority, which gave an irreſiſtable ſolemnity and dominion to his eloquence.

His doctrine was not the formal animadverſion of a *theoriſt*, in the common articles of belief, as laid down by ſchoolmen, or preſcribed by ſynods; neither an hiſtorical or laboured account of the truths and doctrines of holy writ; nor an enthuſiaſtic detail of his own caſual thoughts, or *ſuppoſed* immediate illuminations. His teſtimony was generally a clear, rational, and animated addreſs to the underſtanding; inforcing the fitneſs and excellency of the principles of univerſal religion,—and the amiable and glorious

glorious tendency of thoſe affections, which are ſo particularly inculcated by JESUS CHRIST, and his immediate apoſtles.

Notwithſtanding the remarkable clearneſs which appeared in the arrangement and delivery of his publick diſcourſes; and ſometimes the ſtrictly logical manner in which he reaſoned with his audience, it was not his practice (tho' ſome, who ſecretly envied him, were not wanting to inſinuate the detraction) to *ſtudy*, or *prepare* a diſcourſe, on any ſubject, or for any occaſion. In that reſpect he was ſtedfaſtly in the belief of thoſe principles which diſtinguiſh the ſociety of which he was a member,—That ſuch a previous ſtudy was by no means *eſſential* to an effectual preaching of the truths, and the comfort of the holy chriſtian religion, by a miniſter rightly influenced, and rightly dependant on the one heavenly miniſter.

He was ſenſible of the difference of natural gifts beſtowed on the human mind; and that thoſe natural gifts are capable of being made ſubſervient to a ſtrong and edifying inforcement of thoſe doctrines of religion, in which all the rational part of mankind is ſo eſſentially concerned: and that it is an invariable rule of the divine author of all good, "when he makes

"the

"the miniſter, not to unmake the man." Hence he believed, that thoſe who are called to the great buſineſs of inſtructing and edifying their fellow-beings, in the truths of the kingdom of heaven, are called to the beſt exerciſe of thoſe gifts of the underſtanding, which have their ſource in the fountain of wiſdom, and the immutable diſtinctions of things. And though he believed alſo in the apoſtolical doctrine, that there is a "*diverſity of gifts, proceeding from the ſame ſpirit,*" and that ſuch a diverſity of gifts may be rightly employed in the ſpiritual vineyard, to the inſtruction and comfort of the different claſſes of mankind; yet, that in the ſyſtem of religious ſociety, a prudent care ſhould be uſed not to give haſty countenance to a zeal "not according to knowledge," in weak and uninformed adventurers in the goſpel miniſtry: He ſaw the danger of ſuch well-meaning attempts, and of too liberal a conſtruction of that paſſage of holy writ, that "GOD hath choſen "the fooliſh things of this world to confound "the wiſe; and things that are not, to bring to "naught things that are:" He not only ſaw the *poſſibility* of miſapplying the ſenſe of ſuch a paſſage; but ſometimes could not help lamenting the too great *appearance* of ſuch a miſapplication among ſome of his friends. His common obſervation was, that thoſe who are the moſt ignorant,

ignorant, and unqualified, in the *miniſterial* province, as well as in others, are often the moſt forward and preſumptuous; and in proportion to their zeal and poſitiveneſs in favour of *the ſyſtem*, which is too much *the idol*, of every ſociety, will their ſupport, in the countenance of their fellow-zealots, be found.

With ſuch ſentiments, in a religious ſociety which admits of no preſcribed qualifications, or teſt of ſpiritual abilities, previous to an embarkation in the miniſtry; and in a ſociety too, wherein the infirmity of the human mind cannot be ſuppoſed to be unaffected by party-influence; it is no wonder that he ſhould ſometimes have had to encounter a degree of prejudice, and contrariety of ſentiment, in the application of his principles; but as he never ſought to apply thoſe principles further than by way of general remark, for the general good, he wiſely kept clear of particular and perſonal cenſure about religious qualifications; indeed few men diſliked that employment more than he; and while he was obliged to diſapprove the arrogance of an ignorant zeal, no man made readier and more tender allowances, for want of information, occaſioned by want of opportunity.

The

The difficulties of oppoſition and cenſure towards himſelf, from ſome of thoſe perſons, whoſe narrower ſentiments of things rational and divine he was ſometimes obliged to controvert, as he had ſufficient diſcernment of the human mind to expect them, ſo had he ſufficient experience of the nature and conſolations of the goſpel, to reconcile himſelf to them, with fortitude and tranquility. And, notwithſtanding he had repeated occaſion to ſtand on his guard againſt one of thoſe trials which the apoſtle deplores, "Perils among falſe brethren;" yet, as he ever found himſelf affectionately and faithfully received and ſanctioned by the generality of thoſe to whom he miniſtered, among whom were always numbered men of the moſt virtuous, liberal, and enlarged minds, he had, on the whole of his ſocial and religious intercourſe, no hard lot to ſuſtain; while his viſible advancement in the love of GOD, and in goodwill towards all the families of the earth, preſerved him in a diſpoſition always ready to forgive! This part of his character was, indeed, remarkable in the earlier and more inexperienced part of his life. An inſtance of which may be as uſefully as truly given in this place.

Soon after his firſt appearance in the character of a miniſter, it once happened in a circle of

of his friends, that an elder of ſome pretenſions in the province of church diſcipline, and one who, having been more conſpicuous for his zeal and ſimplicity of underſtanding than any other qualities, had been forward to ſlight his diſtinguiſhed abilities, and to cenſure him for the peculiarity of courage and independence with which he exerted them, became the ſubject of converſation. The intemperate zeal and ſtraitneſs of mind in this perſon were ſpoken of with regret by one of the company, as incompatible with that chriſtian love and general benignity which are the chief ornaments of ſociety, and ſo characteriſtic of the chriſtian religion.

Our friend, who perceived that theſe remarks had reference to ſome unkind treatment which he had received, ſoon replied, as nearly as can be recollected, in the following words: "There was a time, when he was in ſome de-"gree the object of my *fear*, and ſtill more of "my *diſlike*; his illiberal manner of thinking, "and his zeal ſo habitually miſapplied, ſeem to "be cauſes effectually preventing my having "any ſtrict unity of mind with him; but I am "thankful, that he ſoon ceaſed to be an object "of any fear to me; and as to his zeal, though "it be of a complexion which I am never likely "to approve, I can make much allowance for

" it, while I cannot but reſpect the undoubted " goodneſs of his intentions. With regard to " any unkindneſs which I may have received " at his hands, I wiſh to *forget* it, I am ſure I " heartily *forgive* him, and can now ſincerely " ſay that I *love* him."

The reader, who had a perſonal acquaintance with Thomas Letchworth, will readily conceive that he would not loſe an opportunity of remarking, in his favourite and ſenſible way, " That human beings ſeem naturally as va- " rious, in the recipient faculties of their minds, " as they are in their faces:—that their habits of " thinking ſeem to take a different kind of bias, " from different circumſtances, to which we, " by our feeble judgment, are generally unable " to aſſign a cauſe, independent at leaſt of that " hidden cauſe which is the marvellous ſource " of variety, both in ſentient and inanimate " nature; that though we are continually vary- " ing in ſentiment, both on natural and religious " ſubjects, yet there ſeems to be no univerſal " ſtandard fixed by which the thoughts of all " ſerious men can be brought into agreement, " and thereby to a deliverance from all kinds of " mental error: ſo we may not improperly con- " clude that variety of opinion, ſo far as moral " evil is unconcerned, is not inconſiſtent with " the

" the divine government of the world. Hence " we may draw one great and important argu- " ment, for mutual allowance and condeſcen- " ſion, and the fitneſs of our endeavouring, " above all things, to love as brethren, pitying " one another's infirmities."

Many, indeed, were the inſtances that occurred in the courſe of my acquaintance with him, which gave me ſtill ſtronger proofs of the prevalence of this forgiving, and all-reconciling diſpoſition: one of which will not be deemed unworthy of being here mentioned, becauſe it may ſerve, perhaps better than a more popular occurrence, to ſhew how much he had ſtudied, and how well he had profited, in the ſchool of his meek and ſelf-denying Maſter.

In a public meeting for the diſcipline of the ſociety, it happened that another of his brethren was ſo ungenerous as to make an abrupt and cloſe perſonal alluſion to ſome particular circumſtances of his character, which had no ſort of connection with the ſubject of debate, and perhaps was improper in itſelf. The quickneſs of his diſcernment and feeling was ſenſibly touched on the occaſion, as muſt neceſſarily be the caſe with a man of his exquiſite ſenſibility, and he was going to make a reply—a reply

which the nature of the occaſion may be thought to have ſufficiently warranted, if not to have abſolutely called for. But foreſeeing the tendency of a juſt reprehenſion, and evidently giving way again to his own ſecret feelings of better things, he ſat down, and patiently let the matter paſs in ſilence.

It was ſoon afterwards ſuggeſted to him, that a freedom ſo unkind and unwarrantable, ſeemed to merit at his hands a call upon his brother for ſome ſuitable publick acknowledgment:— "No," ſaid he, "I am content to forego any "ſuppoſed ſatisfaction of that kind,—being "ſatisfied fully in this, *that the ſervant of the* "LORD *muſt not ſtrive, but be patient towards all* "*men.* Nor will it be unſeaſonable to ſet down here, that the amiable prevalence of ſuch a chriſtian diſpoſition will often be privately rewarded, with more than an inward conſciouſneſs of well-doing, (though that in itſelf is, perhaps, the ſweeteſt of all conſolations;) for in the above-mentioned inſtance, the offending party was not eaſy without privately making our friend an acknowledgment, and expreſſing regret that he ſhould have taken ſuch an improper liberty.

He was well read in the hiſtory of churches, and the principles of diſcipline as well as of faith,

faith, which have prevailed among the different ſocieties of Chriſtians. This ſtudy he muſt have found, in common with all other ſenſible perſons engaged in it, to afford the moſt ample evidence of the infirmity and contrariety of the human mind.

From this kind of ſtudy he muſt have been amply convinced, that there is no ſubject on which mankind will ſo ſoon take up and adhere to a belief, or ſyſtem of faith, without reaſon and without evidence, as on the ſubject of the higheſt importance!

From this kind of ſtudy he muſt have been abundantly confirmed in his own belief, that there is no ſubject about which the rationality of the human mind will become ſo ſoon and ſo powerfully agitated, as the ſimple, meek, and quiet ſubject of religion! No ſubject about which men will more ſuddenly become contradictory and dogmatical, and be hurried into a cenſorious and virulent temper againſt one another, than the ſubject about which the great Maſter interpoſed his ſtanding heavenly injunction:—"Learn of me, for I am meek and low "of heart!"

He ſaw, as all temperate and reflecting men muſt ſee, that abſurdity and uſurpation were generally the growth of maxims and inferences laid down by credulous, enterpriſing, and intereſted men, who had ſome of the leaſt real pretenſions to thoſe graces of the mind, which are the uniform characteriſticks of *the religion of happineſs*, that is taught and inſpired from heaven.

He ſaw, and feelingly laid the truth to heart, that freſh alarm and commotion were the general attendants on new occurrences of perſonal zeal and enterpriſe, where power was wanting—and that the conſtant concomitants of power were oppreſſion and perſecution, in the name of the GOD of order!

From conſiderations of this ſort, his mind acquired an uniform diſapprobation of loading religious ſociety, under any name, with things in themſelves neither of moral nor chriſtian obligation.

Every ſociety, while it conſiders itſelf as at the greateſt diſtance from unchriſtian incumbrances, and works of ſupererrogation, is bearing its peculiar part in the general character; and

and is ever furniſhing occaſion for the more moderate and prudent among her members, to check the riſing efforts of bigotry and enthuſiaſm.

To this neceſſary work, among his brethren, he often applied himſelf, as occaſion ſeemed to require, with much ſagacity, moderation, and uſefulneſs. And while his place in the miniſtry may poſſibly long remain (in the order of Providence) unfilled up, it will be none of the leaſt obvious reflections, with ſome who ſhall continue on the ſtage of action yet a little longer, that his ſervices in the cauſe of a ſimple and uſeful diſcipline, will alſo be miſſed.

But the wiſdom and power of the great and perpetual governor of the world are ever extended for the accompliſhment of whatever is beſt upon the whole! The ſun riſeth and goeth down—the graſs, the plants, the flowers, and the fruits of the field, grow and wither—the joys and ſorrows, the brightneſs and the gloom, of the world intellectual, are in perpetual ſucceſſion—and all the revolutions of time, are doubtleſs but ſubſervient to the grand purpoſes and glories of eternity!

Having thus far ſtated the main features of the publick character of my friend, I come now to

to place him in the light of an affectionate relative, with reſpect to his own family; and in the more extenſive and beneficial light of a ſocial, philoſophical, and chriſtian member of community.

As a *ſon*, he cultivated a ſtrong reverence towards his parents, which I have been often convinced of by familiar converſation with him, reſpecting them.

His father, though a man different from him in natural talents, and degree of eminence as a publick miniſter, was always conſidered by him as an object no leſs of his eſteem than of his filial affection; and he was wont to ſpeak of his publick character as marked by a ſincerity, goſpel ſimplicity, and univerſal charity, (the great outlines of the character of a "good "ſoldier of JESUS CHRIST") which, as it was his own frequent wiſh to imitate, ſo he never expected to ſurpaſs. He was particularly delighted with the increaſing evidences of the good old man's "growth in the truth," towards the concluſion of his days; and I remember, on one particular occaſion, how ſenſibly he dwelt on ſome frequent expreſſions of his father, in his publick exhortations to the acquiſition of real *wiſdom* and real *love*. "My father," ſaid he,

he, "unconcerned about critical diſtinctions of "faith, is continually inforcing this doctrine:" —"Wiſdom's ways are ways of pleaſantneſs, "and all her paths are peace!" And again, "Live in love, which is the *comfortable part of* "*religion.*"—"Perhaps (he would ſay) ex- "preſſions could not be found more deſcriptive "of my good old father's own ſtate of mind, "and at the ſame time more deſcriptive of that "ſtate into which real religion would lead man- "kind. Such doctrine, after all that can be "ſaid of faith and ordinances, is the ſimple "doctrine of the goſpel. The doctrine of *love*, "as *the comfortable part of religion*, may be "called the very marrow of divinity!"

Of his *mother*, he always ſpoke as a woman who had paſſed through many cares, and who deſerved, and had, his ſympathy and filial regard.

As a *brother*, I cannot, perhaps, do him more juſtice than by inſerting a copy of a letter which he wrote to two of his friends on the occaſion of the deceaſe of his elder brother Robert, in the year 1773. It is indeed ſo full a tranſcript of the language of his feeling heart, and will be ſo pleaſing to moſt liberal-minded readers, on account of the natural, ſtrong, and ſolemn

ſolemn expreſſion contained in it, that its inſertion will need no apology.

" *Chamber of Death*, ****** 1773.

" MY DEAR FRIENDS,

" This morning, about the ninth hour, a " meſſenger from my brother Robert's wife " informed me that *he* lay dying, and wanted " to ſee me. The receipt of a piece of intel- " ligence ſo diſagreeable, and ſo unexpected " (as I had not heard a ſyllable of his illneſs) " you muſt needs think alarmed my paſſions, " and occaſioned ſome ſenſations peculiarly pain- " ful. I haſtened immediately to his houſe, " and found him deprived of his ſenſes, in " ſtrong convulſions, ſtruggling under the pangs " of death. I accoſted him with all the ſym- " pathy which fraternal affection inſpires: he " knew me, attempted to articulate ſome words, " but in vain; his tongue, cleaving to the roof " of his mouth, could not utter one ſyllable, " nor communicate one idea: his right hand, " however, not having 'forgot its cunning,' " had juſt ſtrength enough left to give mine a " momentary ſqueeze, while his eyes endea- " voured to interpret the meaning of it to be " love. I waited aſide his bed ſeveral hours, " and was a ſorrowful ſpectator of a death-bed

" ſcene,

" ſcene, in which ſo near a relation as a bro-
" ther was the patient! And ſuch a ſcene mine
" eyes never beheld before—every part of his
" frame was convulſed, and every nerve ſeemed
" to be ſtrained with anguiſh; and in the con-
" flict with death, the little kingdom of his mind
" was perhaps thrown into tumult, in a man-
" ner analogous to the confuſion that prevailed
" in his corporael ſyſtem. O death, thou king
" of terrors!—Surely thou aſſumedſt thy moſt
" terrible aſpect, in the viſage of one who was
" my brother, my companion, my intimate, my
" friend; a thouſand times we have taken ſweet
" counſel together, a thouſand times gone up
" unto the houſe of GOD in company! About
" ten minutes before his ſoul aſcended *to* GOD
" *who gave it*, the tempeſt ſuddenly ſubſided,
" and a ſilent ſolemn calm enſued: he ceaſed
" to be convulſed, his countenance changed,
" his eyes became dim, and his face gathered
" paleneſs. O GOD, what an humbling ſpec-
" tacle to the pride of man! what an inſtruc-
" tive one to fools! what a ſolemn one to the
" wiſe! My ſoul endured ſome emotions which
" language cannot deſcribe, and had ſome ideas
" for which there are not to be found any ade-
" quate ſigns! Fain would I have entered, as
" it were, into his ſoul, to explore his thoughts
" and his feelings! Fain would I have con-

" verſed

" verſed with him on the verge of eternity, to
" have known, if any, what proſpect he had
" before him; what hopes and expectations, or
" what fears he poſſeſſed reſpecting the ap-
" proaching change; but diſeaſe ſealed up every
" avenue of intelligence between us!—Before
" death had cloſed up every avenue of ſenſe,
" when his hands lay cold and motionleſs by
" his ſide, all the remaining ſparks of life ſeemed
" to be collected together in his eyes, whoſe
" fringed curtains he advanced, and fixed the
" dim languiſhing organs upon *me*, until life
" itſelf ſtole out of thoſe windows, and his laſt
" breath expired!—Alaſs, poor Robert!—my
" elder brother, the firſt-born among many
" brethren—very near thou haſt been unto me;
" in life we were united, but in death we are
" ſeparated!—What is life? this ſhort exiſtence
" of which we are ſo enamoured?—a bubble
" formed out of the ocean of eternity, that
" floats a moment in uncertainty, and then is
" diſſolved for ever! To be born is to begin
" to die; every ſtep we take in life carries us
" nearer to the grave, the gloomy manſion,
" where a promiſcuous multitude huddled to-
" gether, without rank or precedency, are ſilent
" in darkneſs.——But I can no more.

" I have

"I have nothing to ſay about my own affairs "at preſent, and indeed worldly affairs, ſave "thoſe of mere neceſſity, are ſcarce worth "ſpending one's time, with any ſolicitude, "about. Various growing infirmities may "ſoon begin to ſicken us of this trifling ſcene, "and prompt us, ſhould we attain to old age, "full of thoſe infirmities, 'to crawl on our "crutches to the grave for reſt.' *Beyond the "grave my fears do not extend:* I am content to "fall into the hands of a Being, whoſe attri-"bute of mercy (ſo far as I feel and know of "him) like Aaron's ſerpent, ſwallows up all "the reſt! Adieu."

As a *father*, he was tenderly affectionate; he did not live to ſee his ſon out of his apprentice-ſhip, and therefore the kind of affection which he bore him was always that of a parent who conſiders his inexperienced child as immediately dependent upon himſelf for accommodation and counſel. In ſuch a nearneſs of inter-courſe, there are many occurrences which a rigid philoſopher may ſet down under the head of parental weakneſs;—and with *him*, a ſucceſſion of years ſpent in the exerciſes of this natural tenderneſs, will be deemed unimportant beyond a family circle; or if of importance at all, to the publick, that it ſhould be from ſuch

ſuch a mixture of the amiable and the wiſe; or from ſuch an aſcendency of the wiſe over the amiable, as may furniſh a leſſon of wiſdom to compenſate for the frail and partial tendencies of the parental boſom.

To this ſentiment we will make no particular reply, being perſuaded that the more we admit in favour of wiſdom, the leſs we ſhall have to excuſe on the ſide of human weakneſs: but there are times when even the philoſophic parent may derive ſome advantageous ſoftening of the mind, from ſuch a paſſage as I am now going to extract from a letter of our friend concerning his ſon, ſoon after he had placed him at a diſtant ſchool.

"I am glad to hear my dear child is well and "eaſy;—a great part of my happineſs in this "world depends on his welfare. Though he "is not diſtinguiſhed, as *Joſeph* was, by a coat "of many colours; yet the patriarch Jacob "could not have more affection for his fa-"vourite, than I have for mine only ſon."

One thing, however, was remarkable, viz. that notwithſtanding the ſtrength of affection which he bore towards this "only ſon," yet when

when he drew near the close of life, he seldom mentioned him, or shewed any particular solicitude about his company or his welfare; but this, though I have set it down as a circumstance that was remarked by his friends, we may well account for, on those principles of resignation which were in him the confirmed growth of reflection, and a stability of confidence in the sufficiency of the divine power and goodness, to support and comfort every, the minutest part of creation!

Such had been his exalted sentiments of the divine perfections, and such the darling theme of his admonitions to faith among his fellow-beings! It was then no wonder that such a man, under bodily weakness, in which he must necessarily be ever considering himself as a child, dependant upon the power and goodness of the universal Father, should have wholly and most happily committed *his own* child to the keeping of that Father also! He was too deeply read in, and too solemnly accustomed to ponder the sublime doctrines of the divine benediction, not to profit by them, at a season when *resignation* of all his cares into the hands of his GOD became his greatest duty, and his highest privilege.

As

As a *friend*, he was capable of a warmth of attachment which is ſeldom exceeded by the ſuſceptibility of human kind; but though he could readily fall into habits of affection on the ground of common benevolence, yet was he the moſt firmly, becauſe moſt mentally attached, by ſimilarity of religious principles, or the liberal interchanges of philoſophical ſentiment.

When he found a perſon "of a *congenial ſpi-*"*rit*," as he uſed to expreſs himſelf, he was perhaps, more than on moſt other occaſions, in danger of falling into a deviation from the character of a wiſe man. To ſuch companions, though he uſed to ſay they were "*but few in* "*number*," he could not refrain from opening the ſecrets of his whole heart. If he had any weakneſſes, or leanings to weakneſſes, he would confidentially lay them open to ſuch a friend. A diſpoſition which, however, might have its uſe, by proving, where there was ſo much cauſe for admiration of excellence, that human nature in its faireſt ſhape, is not unattended with ſome mental alloy of infirmity.

And though ſuch a diſcovery may not have a tendency to confirm our opinion of the uniform dignity of a great character, it may have its

its more important uſe, with a view to which the remark ſhall here be made:—It may tend at once to increaſe a profitable humility, and raiſe a degree of fortitude in the boſoms of leſs communicative perſons, by teaching them that the ſeeds of imperfection which they find alive in themſelves, and which they ſometimes ſecretly deplore, are not peculiar to them, but make a part of the common lot of humanity!

Whenever he once formed a religious or ſentimental attachment, it ſeemed to him one of the greateſt mortifications of the mind to ſuppoſe that ſuch an attachment could ever be broken, on this ſide the grave, by any caſual occurrence of unfaithfulneſs, or any diminution of eſteem or affection:—inſtances of which, however, he had ſometimes obſerved to be poſſible, by their being actually verified in the circle of his own acquaintance.

When they happened through the general weakneſs and inconſtancy of the human mind, he appeared to be affected with a mixture of regret for others, and diſſatisfaction with himſelf, for having expected too much from human nature; but on ſuch occaſions, as on almoſt every other which required conſolation, he al-

ways drew it from a compariſon of the *preſent* with a *future* ſtate, and was ſatisfied with new and increaſing faith in the compenſations and enjoyments of *immortality*.

When thoſe particular ſocial intercourſes, in which he ſo much delighted, were neceſſarily broken by the inevitable event of *death*, he deeply felt as a man, though he ſo well knew how to ſtand reſigned as a chriſtian.

I have been a ſympathizing witneſs of more than one event of this kind, which it fell to his lot to bear.

But one inſtance may ſerve to ſhew what the nature of his feelings was, conſidered in the light of affectionate perſonal attachment; while his own expreſſive language on the occaſion will be read with religious regard, by thoſe who knew and loved him:—and I truſt, with ſome quickening of good affection alſo in others who knew him not.

Having attended the funeral of one of his friends, with whom he had maintained a correſpondence of that near kind for which his mind was ſo fully formed, he thus expreſſed himſelf in

in a letter written immediately after his return from the performance of the laſt office of love.

"My feelings, of the mournful and humi-
"liating kind, as I followed the poor remains
"of my friend, were ſuch as I want words
"to deſcribe. As we approached the burial
"ground, I fervently prayed that I might
"be ſupported through this laſt conflict with
"a degree of fortitude ſuitable to my ſtation,
"and the ſolemn affecting nature of the ſcene
"before me. My prayer, I believe, was heard;
"I *was* ſupported beyond my expectation in the
"moſt trying moments; and was enabled to
"deliver what I had on my mind for the audi-
"ence at the grave, I think, with more than
"uſual clearneſs, power, and ſolemnity; an un-
"common portion of what I believe to have
"been a divine influence attended me—for
"which I deſire to remain truly thankful."

The preſcribed limits of this undertaking will not allow an inſertion of all the valuable extracts which might be made from the whole of his letters now in my poſſeſſion, and which were the fruits of many years correſpondence, on different occaſions, and in different ſtates of his mind. Extracts which alone would

give importance to ſuch a work as this, and ſtand as *irregular*, indeed, but *laſting* monuments of the comprehenſiveneſs, penetration, and piety of his mind. But ſuch an addition will be the leſs neceſſary on account of a deſign which I find is now going forward, and moſt likely will have been executed before the publication of this pamphlet, to publiſh in a larger volume a ſelect number of his religious diſcourſes, which were taken down by a ſhort-hand writer, in the publick aſſemblies in which they were delivered.

Nevertheleſs, it will be conſiſtent with the main intention of this treatiſe (which is ſincerely the promotion of the cauſe of virtue) to inſert ſome of thoſe paſſages from the letters alluded to, which have an immediate reference to the ſtate of the human mind, to religion, and futurity.

They will alſo have a juſt claim to propriety of introduction, becauſe, ſo far as they go, they will have a direct tendency to illuſtrate and mark the character of their author.

The following extract may be conſidered in itſelf, as it really is in the order of time in which

which it was written, *introductory to the reſt*; the *familiar* manner in which it commences will not render the ſentiments leſs agreeable to readers of a liberal turn of mind; and as to others, it may be a taſk equally fruitleſs and unimportant to endeavour to pleaſe them.

"If we dwelt nearer together, I apprehend "we ſhould often compare our ideas upon va- "rious ſubjects.

"Many of our friends, more diſtinguiſhed for "ſincerity than abilities, decry at a venture all "*ſpeculation*, as vain and unprofitable; and this "has more than a little contributed to keep "many in ignorance, and of courſe to promote "a ſpirit of bigotry. I cannot help thinking "(as every ſerious and impartial enquirer muſt "think) that we are ſtudious in making one an- "other more unwiſe and unhappy in this world, "than GOD (infinitely good!) ever deſigned we "ſhould be. Let us review the general courſe "of the management of children. As ſoon as "they come into the world, they fall into the "hands of the nurſe. She, cruel woman, binds "them hand and foot, and deprives them of the "natural uſe of the members of their bodies; "and what with the fond miſtaken affection of

" their parents, and thoſe about them, it often
" happens, that they are killed with intended
" kindneſſes before they can walk alone and
" feed themſelves. Their imagination too, ere
" long, is filled with objects of gloom and
" terror,—witches, ſpectres, and beings that
" exiſt no where but in the land of fancy.
" Theſe early impreſſions of the diſagreeable
" kind, with a thouſand other prejudices oc-
" caſioned by improper treatment in childhood,
" grow with their growth, and ſtrengthen with
" their ſtrength, while the ſucceeding negligent
" education, perhaps, does but confirm them.
" A kind of *religion* too, under crude notions
" of a GOD and of a devil, and of godlineſs
" and deviliſhneſs, is early inſtilled into them;
" and of thoſe matters there is an endleſs
" variety.

" Parents attempt to impoſe ſentiments on
" their offspring implicitly, which themſelves,
" too generally, have taken up upon truſt, from
" their predeceſſors. What a bundle of ab-
" ſurdities and contradictions are mankind in
" general made up of! Some of every party
" preach up and preach down in ſucceſſion, the
" abſolute right and neceſſity of a free enquiry,
" and attempt to bring their authorities for
" both

"both from the ſame ſource. One moment "we are told it is impious, or at leaſt dangerous, "to truſt in man, in creeds and the tradi- "tions of man: and the apoſtle is called in "as authority for this doctrine: 'Whatſo- "ever is not of faith is ſin.' 'Let every man "be fully perſuaded in his own mind,' &c. "In the next we are told, that we muſt lay "aſide our own underſtanding, and become "(in ignorance) fools, for CHRIST's ſake. "What an abſurdity! how is it poſſible to un- "derſtand without our underſtanding, and de- "termine moral right from wrong without the "exerciſe of it! It would not be leſs ridi- "culous to bid us ſhut our eyes, or put them "out, that we might ſee objects in a better "light!

"In the natural world there are innumerable "objects to exerciſe our eyes upon, in order to "find out their qualities and properties, their "relation to our ſervice and convenience, and "their relation one to another, whether of the "ſame, or different qualities; and on the exer- "ciſe of our judgment, founded in experi- "ment, to determine theſe matters.

"In

"In the moral world, the underſtanding, "taken for the faculties, is to the mind what "the eye is to the body; and the light of the "mind may with as much propriety be termed "the faculty, as in ſcripture, literally (though "not erroneouſly in its original import) the "light of the body is called the eye. They are "neither ſtrictly true—the eye is not the light "of the body; it is but the organ by which "light is conveyed; nor is reaſon, taken for the "faculty of perception, the light of the mind; "but truth is that light, which is manifeſted to "the mind through the faculties. And, as in "the natural world, to acquire a real know-"ledge of the qualities of bodies, and their "poſitions, the ſight and other ſenſes muſt be "exerciſed; ſo in the moral world, truths which "relate to our well-being, are to be diſcovered "by the exerciſe of thoſe faculties, or the pro-"per principles and materials of knowledge.

"But it may be ſaid, why is there ſuch a "variety of opinions among mankind, if this "medium of knowledge be univerſal? *That is* "*the queſtion.* The beſt reply I can make to it "is, that the different early prejudices of man-"kind float like phantoms before the viſive "faculty, and confound viſion: people's fears,

"too,

"too, of venturing out of the borders of their "little Goſhen, the precincts of a party, prevent "their perceiving moral truths, which are in "themſelves clear as the ſun at noon-day. "Some people ſeem to open but one eye, and "juſt glimpſe at things; while others, forget-"ting that the ſource which enables us to look "upon objects is not, in itſelf, an object a-"dapted to our organs of viſion, looking too "ſtedfaſtly at the ſun, have been blinded and "confounded.

"Thus ſome people who have attempted to "pierce the ſkies, and explore him that dwells "far above the heavens, the ſource of all exiſt-"ence, have brought upon themſelves a debi-"lity of intellect, ſimilar to the organical "weakneſs, occaſioned by looking at the ſun; "which has prevented afterwards their ſeeing "even moral objects of contemplation, which "relate to their ſphere."

The apparent happineſs of the different claſſes and deſcriptions of mankind, ariſing from different degrees of ſuſceptibility, &c. were frequent ſubjects of his obſervation; his remarks upon them were generally inſtructive, and tending

ing

ing to the great advantage of exciting content and reſignation among his fellow-beings.

Of that nature the following extract may be conſidered as an example.

" It ſeems to be the lot of ſome people to ſail " along, wind and tide in their favour, 'on the " ſmooth ſurface of a ſummer's ſea,' though it " is probable that moſt men meet with diſ- " agreeable and painful occurrences. We are " incompetent judges what ſhare of unhappi- " neſs falls to the lot of others, becauſe we are " unacquainted with the ſenſations they feel. " We ſee people in a ſuperior ſphere, furniſhed " with the means which we think capable of " inſuring a ſeries of pleaſurable ideas and im- " preſſions. We are apt to think that they " have but little or no occaſion of anxiety; but " events which we think would not diſturb our " peace, we find ſufficient to interrupt theirs. " And troubles which we could propoſe to bear " with as much indifference as the weight of a " graſshopper, they complain under as inſup- " portable burdens. Should we, in paſſing " along, ſee a man groaning under the weight " of a few feathers laid upon his head, which " he is obliged to carry, would he not meet our

" momentary

" momentary contempt and ridicule? But were
" it poſſible for us to know that the weight of
" his feathers, compared with his *imaginary* little
" ſtrength to bear them, was equal to an hun-
" dred weight placed upon the head of ſome
" others, or ourſelves; ſhould we not have oc-
" caſion to pity ſuch a man, and to think his
" complaint as reaſonable as their's or our's?

" This may ſerve to illuſtrate my doctrine,
" that ſome people in ſuperior ſpheres of life,
" who have been trained in affluence and in-
" dulgence, ſeem to have more delicate feelings
" from diſappointment, and their happineſs to
" be more eaſily interrupted by what others
" call trivial occurrences, than thoſe others
" have from the moſt afflictive events that can
" occur to them.

" We are not formed to derive complete
" happineſs from any poſſeſſions this world can
" afford us; a certain degree, perhaps, is allotted
" to each, and flows to us from the concourſe
" of events, which we can neither forward nor
" control.

" It will perhaps be ſaid, that it is a man's
" own fault, if, poſſeſſing all the aids of opu-
" lence,

" lence, he is not at leaſt much happier than " ſuch people uſually are; and it is laid to the " account of the moral turpitude of his diſpo- " ſition, which turns the ſuppoſed ſweets of life " into acids, and converts its ſpecial *bleſſings* " into *curſes*.

" But is frail man maſter of his diſpoſitions? " Is it at his option to acquire a pleaſurable re- " liſh to what are called the bleſſings of life? " Can he command the ſenſation called con- " tentment? We are told that 'there are to " whom GOD hath granted riches, but not a " heart to enjoy them.' And what are all gifts " and poſſeſſions without ſuch a heart or capa- " city? Or rather, what are they but evidences, " that the happineſs of this world, or the ſatis- " faction reſulting from the things of it, is " much more under the influence of an equal " and divine allotment than many people con- " ceive?

" Some ſevere religioniſts may argue, that " the rich ſhould be the *ſtewards* of GOD; that " in ſuch a capacity they muſt be happy; and " the reaſon why they are not in that capacity, " and conſequently made happy, is, that they " cultivate a perverſeneſs of will—and their

" want

"want of happineſs is altogether of their own "ſeeking. But no man ſeeks unhappineſs in "preference to happineſs; and the doctrine of "the *will* would lead us into difficulties about "which the wiſeſt diſputants have found them-"ſelves, and left their readers, in uncertainty. "The beſt uſe we can make of what we ſee, "ſeems to be this:—to conclude that the diffi-"culties of the ſtations in which we ſtand, are "no abſolute impediments to that degree of "happineſs which may be proper for us in this "world; ſince thoſe who are without the ſup-"poſed *cauſes* of thoſe difficulties, are on the "whole no more happy than ourſelves,—and "wanting one ſource of anxiety, they find it "from another.

"GOD is myſterious; and all his providence, "and the œconomy of his government, are "myſterious alſo. Let us look towards him "with ſuitable awe, and be abundantly ſatisfied "in this, that whatever, for purpoſes of his "unſearchable wiſdom, he withholds from us "in this world, he can and will compenſate "eternally in a world far better!"

Few men had a more lively reliſh of the innocent pleaſures of ſocial intercourſe, and conſequently

ſequently he enjoyed much from the numerous friendſhips, which a diſpoſition and qualities like his were calculated to engage. But ſuch were his convictions alſo of the inſtability of all terreſtial good, and his conſtant remarks on the occurrences of human imperfection as well in himſelf as in others, that he was often penſive and ſolicitous about the *end of all things*, which it is ſaid, "the wiſe will lay unto his heart." Hence his converſation and letters were frequently in a ſerious and deep ſtrain of reflection, of which the following extract will be deemed as no inappoſite ſpecimen:—

"In the peculiar uncertainty in which I am "placed, and with the ſerious proſpect which "opens to my view from various cauſes, fain "would I draw aſide the curtain of futurity, "and read my allotment in the world which is "to come! This life, at ſome times, preſents "to me little elſe than a catalogue of calami-"ties: knowing what is paſt, I fear for the "future; and finding no reſt for the ſole of my "foot in the circumſtances of this world, I "would, if poſſible, gain an aſſurance of a per-"manent inheritance in the world that is to "come! But when I reflect on the terms of "admittance into the *better country*, which ſome

"ſyſtems

" ſyſtems of religion contain, I cannot help " ſaying, 'LORD, who is ſufficient for theſe " things?'—A pure and diſintereſted love of " virtue is the *Ne plus ultra*; and yet, it ſeems, " if we credit ſome polemical authors, nothing " ſhort of that attainment can recommend us " as the proper objects of the rewards of virtue.

" Now, if we examine our own *hearts*, what " we are prone to do, and refrain from, is not " ſo much from the abſtract view of its fitneſs, " as to eſcape a dreaded evil, or to acquire a " preſent or remote ſuperior good! *Fear* ſeems " to be a paſſion that tinges even our pureſt de- " votion at the altar, and proſtrates us at the " ſhrine of virtue. The *ſelfiſh* paſſion is blended " with all the reſt. We gratify it, perhaps, as " much when we beſtow alms on thoſe indi- " gent who excite our *pity*, (which is *pain*) as " when we injure a perſon from a ſpirit of re- " venge.—In relieving others we relieve our- " ſelves. This, indeed, is entering deeply into " the ſource of our volitions and actions: but " ſuch an entrance may be profitable in abating " our pride, which is too ſeldom fully got rid " of; and our ſelf-complacency, which is ſo " natural to us!

" When

"When we trace our beſt actions to their "ſources, what an humiliating diſcovery do they "afford! But the Being who made us be- "ſtowed upon us that conſtitution and com- "plexion which we have. 'He knows our "frame; he remembers that we are but duſt.' "I wiſh, and devoutly wiſh, that we poor, frail, "and erroneous beings, had one thouſandth "part of the pity and compaſſion for one an- "other, that I am perſuaded the GOD of mercy "has for us all! Could we then think of put- "ting almoſt any of our brethren at a diſtance, "becauſe, forſooth, they have through inad- "vertence, erred (as we think) from the *right* "*way:* or, through ignorance or want of capa- "city, cannot ſee every object (of what we "deem eſſential faith) in the ſame point of view "as ourſelves? I am perſuaded that the man "who would put his brother to as great a "diſtance from him, as the power which he "poſſeſſes would enable him to do, that man, "whether quaker, preſbyterian, or of whatever "church, has much to learn of the eſſence of "goſpel love.

"Some people ſeem to imagine, that there "cannot be perſecution without an invaſion of "perſonal property, or attempting to inflict "bodily

" bodily pains; but in my opinion, whoever
" grieves, or even diſturbs the peace of another,
" in matters which purely reſpect religious opi-
" nions, *is a perſecutor*, becauſe he therein uſurps
" a prerogative, under pretence of being an in-
" ſtrument in the hand of the LORD; or in
" other words, (though men hate the term) as
" GOD's vicegerent—he uſurps a prerogative
" which belongs to GOD: and ſuch people can
" defend their conduct by arguments little better
" than thoſe which the church of Rome advances
" in ſupport of her inquiſitorial juriſdiction.

" It is very obſervable, and to the diſadvan-
" tage of the chriſtian profeſſion, that no body
" of chriſtians whatever refrained from perſe-
" cuting the bodies as well as the minds of diſ-
" ſenters, when they had acquired power to do
" it with ſafety to themſelves! The primitive
" churches no ſooner became poſſeſſed of power,
" than they applied it to exterminate heathens,
" with as much virulence as heathens had per-
" ſecuted chriſtians. And the preſbyterians of
" the laſt century (who complained as loudly as
" the quakers, under the reign of K. Charles I.)
" in Oliver's time, perſecuted the quakers with
" redoubled zeal and aſſiduity.

"These truths evince to me, that church "zeal, connected with power, is uniformly dan-"gerous, and that the rigid among *us*, in the "present times, know not what spirit they are "of, while they are for stretching the line of "church censure and discipline to the utmost "limits of the power which the legislature has "given them.

"But the kingdom of CHRIST, not being "a kingdom of this world, is not to be sup-"ported or governed in a manner similar to "a political kingdom, where the legislative "and executive branches are necessarily exerci-"sed by deputies. CHRIST is sole judge and "law-giver; and the legislative and executive "prerogatives are solely vested in him, to whom "only christians, *as christians*, are accountable; "and by him to be rewarded and punished, as "to matters of faith and religious practice. As "a *citizen*, man is accountable to his neighbour "for his practical moral conduct, and that "only. Hence is inferred the evil of de-"vising, and setting up, peculiarities of reli-"gious belief and conduct in society, which "are non-essential to christianity; and which "too many, I fear, get rid of the trouble of, "the shortest way, by receiving with submissi-

"on;

" on; or more troubleſome conſequences may " follow.

" The more I ſee of the world, its manners, " cuſtoms, and prejudices, the more I am con- " vinced of the futility of attempts to reconcile " the jarring intereſts of mankind. We may " as well endeavour to reduce men to one ſize, " and give them one ſet of features and deſires, " as to make them think alike on any ſubject " that is not ſelf-evident: and even on ſome " of *thoſe* ſubjects, as they are generally deemed, " individuals will think variouſly. Thoſe peo- " ple who reflect the leaſt are generally the moſt " confident; and they who have the leaſt reaſon " on their ſide generally perſiſt the longeſt in " the maintenance of their cauſe.

" Opinions imbibed by education take root " in the paſſions, and impoſe an evidence on " the mind far ſuperior to a rational demonſtra- " tion. Such people will tell us they *feel* what " they advance to be true; and to diſpute their " *feelings*, is to diſpute againſt what ſome call " the *dictates of conſcience*; others, *the witneſs* or " *inward teſtimony of* GOD *himſelf*; and is the " very height of preſumption and impiety. A " man cannot be comforted by any opinion or

" practice without *feeling* himself so; but having " such a *feeling*, he has sufficient evidences of " truth; and that feeling being made the crite- " rion to judge other people's feelings by, is of " course considered as the *seal* of truth, or *stamp* " of divinity; and whatever opinion bears this " attendant impression must be allowed to carry " with it its own evidence, and is not to be " disputed, any more than the coin that bears " the image and superscription of Cæsar!

" Every society hath dogmas, as well as that " every nation hath coin peculiar to itself, and " which will only pass currently within its own " precincts. A favourite leader, or polemi- " cal champion, as well as an arbitrary prince " in the article of coin, may impose the basest " metal of error upon his followers, and it will " often be deemed sterling: the one from " power, or force of arms hung up *in terrorem*, " and the other by the force of spiritual evils— " *present disgrace* and *eternal misery*—with which " he threatens all that dispute it! Such have " been the workings of human device and en- " thusiasm, under the name of RELIGION.

" CHARITY! thou essence of that religion " which is simple and true! we have more to " hope

"hope from thy celeſtial influence than from "any other—neglected and baniſhed as thou "art! With a view to the reconciliation of "the religious opinions of the world, and to "ſubſtitute thoſe more true, free enquiries, ela-"borate reſearches, and profound metaphyſical "controverſies, have been employed—but in "vain.

"With the utmoſt ſtretch of the faculties, we "can indeed diſcover but little more of poſi-"tive truth than the conſummate weakneſs and "ignorance of human nature, under the *variety* "of its influences; but, without *ſtretching* the "ſkirt of CHARITY, it is of ſuch ample dimen-"ſions, that it would cover all the unavoidable "and habitual imbecilities of all churches, and "prompt us to pity thoſe whoſe errors we can-"not correct.

"I would to GOD that mankind diſputed "leſs, and loved one another more: diſputa-"tion never ingendered love; but has produced "hatred with every evil work. But 'Charity "never faileth:' and may we not fail to ſeek an "aſylum, whenever we can, in her! Farewell."

If the foregoing extract ſhall have been deemed pertinent to the end for which it was inſerted, much approbation may be expected from the inſertion of the following *whole letter*; which, notwithſtanding the *characteriſtic* freedom and boldneſs of thought contained in it, and its liability to cenſure from narrow and timorous minds, it would be injuſtice to the great abilities of the author, and the generous intelligent reader, to curtail.

MY DEAR FRIEND!

"To come to the *ſubject*, and to the point, "without a needleſs introduction:—

"Intellectual gold, or ſterling truth and in-"telligence, like the ore of the ſouthern conti-"nent, ſeems to be monopolized by a few; and "by that few it is too generally either hoarded "up in ſecret, and is of no ſervice either to "themſelves or to the world, or miſapplied "to purpoſes that diſgrace human nature. Men "of the greateſt capacities, of the brighteſt "genius, and deepeſt penetration, have too "ſeldom been governed in their volitions and "actions *by principle*, in any age, or in any part "of the world. Paſſion, ſtrengthened by in-

"dulgence,

" dulgence to a reſemblance of the tempeſt,
" makes reaſon and principle as uſeleſs fre-
" quently in the voyage of life, as the com-
" paſs and the rudder.

" The wiſe and the fooliſh, the philoſopher
" and the peaſant, yield to the impetus of one
" gale, and are hurried to gratifications which
" the inſtinctive moral ſenſe of the one, and
" the refined theory of the other, built up in
" the hours of calm receſs and contemplation,
" diſclaim. Annihilate the diſtinction of dreſs,
" the technical terms of art, with the aſſumed
" maſk, from the ſocieties of mankind, and in-
" trinſic merit might be as difficult to find as the
" philoſopher's ſtone, which the alchymiſts for
" many generations have ſought in vain. Hu-
" man nature, ſtript of the pageantry of pre-
" tence, or the diſguiſe of art, affords a moſt
" humiliating view to the great pride of that
" little creature called man; and leads to the
" concluſion made by the royal philoſopher—
' Surely man in his beſt eſtate is altogether
' vanity!'

" The hidden ſources of corruption in our-
" ſelves, like embers raked together, and co-
" vered with aſhes, burn in ſecret; while, like
" a peſtilential

" a peſtilential vapour, they diffuſe their noxious
" influence unſeen, throughout all our man-
" ners, and tinge them with a moral turpitude
" and depravity, which it is the buſineſs of
" pride and ſelf-flattery to cover as much as
" poſſible, both from ourſelves and others.

" A reflection on the diſorder and chaotic ſtate
" of the human mind, and of the wretched-
" neſs and miſery which it ſeems to poſſeſs,
" either by contagion from one another, or by
" inheritance from our predeceſſors, inſpires to
" the contemplative mind, a wiſh, that the
" Almighty fiat would interpoſe, and reduce it
" into the order that ſhould exclude error with
" every evil from the ſyſtem, by giving a turn
" to the intellectual balance, leſſening our mo-
" tives to a deviation from rectitude, and
" augmenting our motives to virtue.

" But, as the poet ſays, we are not to en-
" quire 'why heaven has made us as we are:'
" to make the beſt uſe of the powers which we
" have received, and the opportunities of im-
" provement thrown in our way—if it be im-
" poſſible to find a complete remedy for all our
" imperfections and pains—may at leaſt ſerve to
" improve them, and alleviate our wretched-
" neſs;

" neſs: the great *Panacea*, or univerſal remedy
" for all our grievances, is in the hands of but
" *one phyſician*. The architect of the univerſe,
" (in which I include rational beings) alſo
" ſuperintends the fabric which his wiſdom
" planned, and his power accompliſhed. He
" doeth whatever pleaſeth him in the army of
" heaven, and amongſt the inhabitants of the
" earth; he ſetteth up, and he pulleth down;
" he raiſes, and he humbles to the duſt; and
" to ſhew his abſolute dominion over univerſal
" nature, he turneth the hearts of men as a
" man turneth a water-courſe in a field; and
" who ſhall ſay unto him, what doeſt thou?

" Some people ſpeak in raptures of 'the
'glorified ſpirits that incircle the throne of
'heaven.' We may indeed ſuppoſe, and rea-
" ſonably, that in the ſcale of beings there may
" be exiſtencies as far ſuperior to us, in point
" of intellectual powers and moral excellence,
" as the heavens are to the earth, or as man is
" to the zoophyte—the loweſt known link in
" the vaſt chain, which the imagination of Plato
" had faſtened to the throne of GOD, and run
" out into immenſity. There is much of poe-
" tical beauty in the figure; but the ſentiment
" it conveys has no ſupport in reaſon. There
" cannot

" cannot be a gradation of beings rising up to " Deity; the higheſt order, the winged cherub, " or ſeraph, are ſtill infinitely diſtant from the " perfections of Deity; no created being can " even approach towards his perfection.

" It is very obſervable, that the moſt exalted " ideas that we have of the glorified ſpirits, " and the happy in the ſuperceleſtial regions, " are but beautiful images, often borrowed " from the ſenſible repreſentation of the blan- " diſhments of pageantry—the inſtruments of " pomp—with the acquiſition of power and of " ambition on earth. Theſe ſpirits we ſpeak " of, as ſurrounding a throne—that they wear " crowns, are kings, and have all that is ana- " logous to the height of what unbounded " power, avarice, and ambition could confer " on a Pompey, an Alexander, or a Cæſar! Is " it not ſtrange, that when the heart ſwells with " rapture on the moſt ſublime themes, all the " trappings of external pomp and luxury, with " all the appendages of a court, and the honours " of a courtier, ſhould intrude into the human " mind? Is it not ſtrange, that in attempting " to become heavenly-minded, we ſhould feel " thoſe paſſions excited which it is the buſineſs " of religion to ſuppreſs; and that in order to " make

" make people humble, we ſhould addreſs them
" with the imagery of earthly things; and in-
" troduce to their view all the materials of pride,
" and all the objects which a thirſt of con-
" queſt and glory can inſpire?—as if the paſſi-
" ons, unlawfully indulged on earth, would be
" gratified in heaven, and have a perpetuity of
" exiſtence.

" Sober chriſtians talk of an hereafter, as if
" they expected to be adorned with crowns and
" emeralds, and to poſſeſs an apartment in a
" palace ſuperb beyond conception. And
" while they are conſidering, with a degree of
" religious horror, the ideas which Mahome-
" tans and Indians form of the intercourſe of
" a future ſtate, many of them ſeem to be
" almoſt as little aware of the abſurdity of their
" own ideas of heavenly enjoyments and eter-
" nal bliſs.

" We cannot, however, with the utmoſt
" ſtretch of our faculties, exclude all imagery
" and ſenſible repreſentation from our view.
" We cannot conceive of quality diſtinct from
" all body; nor of happineſs ſeparate from
" place.

" Enthuſiaſts

"Enthuſiaſts* and poets derive their pleaſure, "and communicate it to others, from one "ſource. We muſt not expect ſerious ſatisfac- "tion from either of them, while their minds "are given up to delight in extravagance and a "licentious imagination.

"In my calm and contemplative moments, "inſtead of admitting a croud of imagery, *I* "*attempt—I attempt*, I ſay, to indulge an idea, "that diſembodied happy ſpirits in a future "ſtate, diveſted of thoſe childiſh paſſions for a "garter, a place at court, a ſtar, or a blue rib- "band; endued with other ſenſes more nu- "merous, or avenues of intelligence more "perfect, their employment will be to inveſti- "gate the works of Almighty power, and the "diſpenſations of his providence, as well as his "attributes; by which, perhaps, unfolding the "myſteries of his wiſdom in creating, and his "providence in ſuperintending—the difficulties "that have embarraſſed pious men in this world "may be cleared up, their doubts removed; "and the divine attributes, in that ſtate of "exiſtence, developed from the obſcurity in "which they ſeemed to have been enſhrouded

* By an Enthuſiaſt, I mean a miſtaken pretender to inſpiration only.

"as

" as with a cloud, may, like the ſun in its me-
" ridian altitude in a cloudleſs ſky, ſhine with
" infinitely more luſtre than we at preſent could
" endure; may enlighten us into truths of which
" we have now no conception—the perpetual
" diſcovery of which, to all eternity, may afford
" us a moſt refined ſpecies of rational felicity,
" and excite in us the inceſſant oblation of
" *thankſgiving and praiſe!*

" The *poſſibility* of our being endued with
" ſenſes of which we have not, nor can have,
" any more idea at preſent than a blind man
" has of ſeeing, or a deaf man of hearing, may
" be eaſily admitted: its *probability* too may be
" allowed, on the ſuppoſition that nothing
" could impart to us ſo much happineſs, nor
" excite in us ſo ardent a ſpirit of devotion, as
" the rendering us capable of inveſtigating ſo
" much of the Almighty's works; or exploring
" ſo much of the myſtery of his moral govern-
" ment, as might effectually inſpire us, from
" *conviction*, to celebrate his praiſe in the ſong
" of Moſes and of the Lamb—" *Great and mar-*
" *vellous are thy works*, LORD GOD *Almighty*
" *—juſt and true are all thy ways, thou King of*
" *ſaints.*"

" The

"The ſufferings of the preſent life are much "aggravated by our ignorance of their cauſe, "or their end; 'We ſee but in part, and know 'but in part;' and patience and reſignation "only under the preſent evils, and an expecta- "tion of their terminating in a ſtate where all "our doubts will be cleared up, and our ſphere "of comprehenſion enlarged, can afford any "ſubſtantial mitigation of our preſent miſeries, "or alleviate our ſufferings! Farewell."

Thomas Letchworth was a man who always ſet an high value upon that ſimplicity of mind, which engages in the promotion of the cauſe of virtue, by any benevolent means, without the arrogating of applauſe, or the aſſuming of importance. No fruit of a religious character more delighted him, than the genuine language of *conviction*—that after all which human beings can do, in obedience to the laws of righteouſneſs, and perſuaſions of duty, they are but *unprofitable ſervants*.

As he conſidered nothing more pernicious in religious ſociety, than ſpiritual pride, ſo he believed none to be more fit for religious ſervice on earth, or more prepared for the happineſs of eternity, than thoſe who had the loweſt opinion

opinion of the *merit* of their *motives* to action. And hence it might be, that on almoſt every occaſion in which he had an opportunity of aiding the ſide of weakneſs, againſt the aſſumings of power and ſuperior influence, he was a conſtant and undaunted advocate. In ſuch caſes he was ever unconcerned about the claſhings of his own *private intereſt*; which, with a nobility of ſpirit only known to great and generous minds, he often ſacrificed without heſitation or regret.

An inſtance of this kind, which fell within my own obſervation, I cannot refrain from inſerting in this place. One of his profeſſed friends, having no children or near relative to whom he could conſider himſelf obligated to bequeath the poſſeſſion of his property after his death, had formed the reſolution of making a conſiderable bequeſt in favour of his friend Letchworth. But it happening that this perſon had acted, as he thought, diſingenuouſly in the line of ſociety-conduct, our friend oppoſed his ſentiments, at the well-known riſque of ſeveral hundred pounds, with the ſame free and independant ſpirit as though he had been utterly a ſtranger to any ſuch intention in his favour. An honeſt and generous ſpirited man, indeed, could

could not have done otherwiſe; but in ſuch circumſtances, a man's integrity is fully tried, and the nobility of his principles fully aſcertained.

Compared with many, our friend may be ſaid to have died a *young man*; but in the character of an experienced and benevolent diſciple of the divine Miniſter of miniſters, he was an affectionate, monitory, and encouraging *father*. He had experienced the ſecret diſcouragements ariſing from forward and cenſorious diſpoſitions, and had ſurmounted them with chriſtian triumph. He was therefore qualified to extend the hand of ſpiritual help, and to ſpeak the feeling animating language of repoſe and confidence, in the protection of the great Helper of Iſrael!

More inſtances of that ſort of qualifications might be given than can be conſiſtent with the limits of this work; but as his written productions, whenever they have the cauſe of true religion for their object, are ever ſententious, comprehenſive, and excellent, and always ſpeak beſt for themſelves, I ſhall here have recourſe to them.

The

The following paſſages from ſundry paſtoral letters, to different perſons, ſetting forth alſo ſome of his own experience, may be inſerted here, with a proſpect of ſervice to *ſome* readers: for their having been attended with much comfort to thoſe for whom they were written, furniſhes at leaſt a pleaſant preſumption, that others, in ſimilar circumſtances, may profit by them—while their own native beauty cannot fail of being agreeable to all who ſhall read with feeling and religious minds.

The firſt will ſoon appear to be an addreſs to a familiar friend, on his embarkation in the miniſtry.

* * * * * * * * * * *

"I ſympathize with thee—I feel for thee with "all the tenderneſs of an affectionate parent. "Poor *Peter*'s love was ſtrong enough to make "him ſtep out of the ſhip upon the ſurface of "the unſtable water, but his faith was not "ſufficient to bear him up above its waves: "his LORD, however, knew the integrity of "his heart, and ſaved him from deſtruction. "Thou haſt taken a ſtep, which, perhaps, thou "haſt at times repented of; but having *ſet thy* "*hand to the plough*, remember thou art not

" warranted to *look back*. *I pray for thee, that*
" *thy faith fail not.* Prepare thyſelf for fightings
" without, and fears within—nor imagine that
" a ſtrange thing hath happened to thee, when
" thou art buffeted and tempted: thy maſter
" endured more than will be permitted to at-
" tend thee—reviled, perſecuted, reproached,
" and at length crucified between two thieves,
" by the people whom he ſought to redeem,
" and render eternally happy!—Wait upon thy
" gift, and exerciſe thyſelf in meditation and
" prayer; ſo will *day unto day utter ſpeech, and*
" *night unto night ſhew thee knowledge.*

" I am but young, yet an old ſoldier in the
" Lamb's army; many wounds have been given
" me by enemies in the open field of battle; and
" many by others, who lay in ambuſh, and
" waited as it were to take my life for a prey;
" but they are all healed up, and have not left
" a ſcar. I have had the honour of being at-
" tended by a *ſkilful phyſician*—who, like the
" good Samaritan, had compaſſion on me, while
" the prieſt and the Levite, without giving
" me one kind look, paſſed by me on the other
" ſide of the way! He adminiſtered the wine,
" and poured the healing oil of conſolation
" into my wounded ſoul, and made the neceſ-
" ſary

" ſary proviſion for my ſupport—for I had no-
" thing to pay.

" Be not diſcouraged at the gloomy proſpect
" which may ſometimes appear to thy view—
" go on ſteadily, neither turning to the right
" hand, nor to the left, in full aſſurance that
" thou wilt reſt at the end of thy pilgrimage,
" beyond the confines of evil, where the wick-
" ed ſhall ceaſe from troubling thee. I ſincerely
" deſire thy growth and proſperity in the good
" work in which thou haſt begun; and that
" thou may'ſt, by a patient and diligent atten-
" tion to it, reap the effect of it, which is peace
" and aſſurance for ever.

" My heart is enlarged under a ſenſe of my
" heavenly Father's love, mercifully manifeſted
" to two ſuch unworthy creatures as we are:
" it is not of merit, but of pure grace, that we
" are favoured with the little which we have
" made ſo little uſe of, while we are ſo impor-
" tunate to receive more! *Art thou in health,*
" *my brother?* is the ſalutation of my brotherly
" affection: I am deeply intereſted in thy well-
" fare; whatever contributes to the promotion
" and ſecurity of it, will give me pleaſure; and
" whatever ſhall impair, or render it precarious,

" I ſhall eſteem an evil, and feel no leſs than " thyſelf.

" When I contemplate on the *perfection* of " moral excellence, I pant after it; but deſpair " of ever attaining it on this ſide the grave. " I wiſh, however, to preſs on toward that per- " fection, and to have thee for my compa- " nion; and therefore, come, my brother—Let " us go up to the houſe of GOD in company; " to the mountain of the LORD, where the " lion and the lamb lie down together, and no " creature has a diſpoſition to hurt or deſtroy; " but where charity, fervent charity, poſſeſſes " every one of them: there let us take ſweet " counſel, and offer our gifts together upon " that altar, whereat thoſe who ſerve the taber- " nacle of fleſhly gratifications 'have no right " to partake.'

" Under all thy trials, whether in proſperity " or in adverſity, ſeek ſtrength to ſupport thee " under them, by humbly waiting upon that " inviſible and incomprehenſible being, who fills " immenſity, and governs all things by his will, " which is his power: whatever he wills to exiſt, " exiſts; he ſaid, and it was done; he com- " manded, and it was ſo—'Let there be light,

" and

'and there was light.' He is our father, our "protector, our friend, our judge, and our de-"liverer out of evil: he knows our frame, he "remembers that we are but duſt, and pitieth "even them who have no compaſſion for one "another.

"My heart, my whole heart, is impreſſed "with a filial fear of the 'I AM THAT I AM;' "and though I am incapable of doing any thing "to promote *his* eſſential glory and happineſs, "yet the Almighty knows I would, if I could, "do ſome ſervice even unto him; and I truſt he "will benignantly accept my beſt intentions, and "do me all the good that ſhall conſiſt with his "own attributes! This meaſure of good he "will alſo moſt aſſuredly beſtow on all men: "but thoſe who pray for his favour with reve-"rence and ſingleneſs of heart, ſhall moſt ſen-"ſibly feel the comfort of his all-ſuſtaining "preſence.——May the language of our hearts "be ever this:—

"Great GOD, look down complacently on "thy creatures, and cauſe them whom thou "madeſt of the duſt, to look up unto thee; "and augment our love one for another, that "we may walk obediently before thee as bre-

" thren, without falling out by the way! Thou
" knoweſt us altogether as we are; and we
" know enough of ourſelves, and of thee, to
" abate our pride, and humble us at thy foot-
" ſtool! O LORD, we acquieſce in the preſent
" diſpenſation of thy providence, and deſire that
" we may be ſtrengthened to acquieſce in every
" future one, in time and in eternity; in this
" world and in the next. Into thy hands, and
" to thy protection, we reſign our ſouls and
" bodies; firmly believing thou doſt not think
" us beneath thy notice, though we, thy poor
" creatures, too often think one another be-
" neath our's.—Thou madeſt us, thy power
" cauſed us to be, and thy power continues our
" being: ſuch as thou haſt ſeen meet to ordain
" it to be, we thank thee for it, without pre-
" ſuming to enquire why, or to complain that,
" we were not conſtituted otherwiſe, if other-
" wiſe we could have been.

" Moſt righteous, holy, wiſe, powerful, good
" GOD! every excellent and adorable attri-
" bute is eſſential to thy nature.—Innumerable
" worlds manifeſt thy glory, and the proviſion
" which thou haſt made for us in this wherein
" we live and move, affords a moſt ſenſible de-
" monſtration of thy munificence; we thank
" thee

" thee for all the preſent good which we enjoy,
" and humbly hope, that all the evils which
" we endure may work together, and accom-
" pliſh that moral rectitude in us, that may
" qualify us for a felicity which ſhall be without
" end. Amen!"

" In proportion to a man's power (in which
" I include opportunity) to do good, 'he has
'a call to do good,' is a ſentiment which thou
" haſt already met with. I have long adopted
" it—I have alſo attempted to propagate it in
" the courſe of my pilgrimage.

" In my beſt moments I lament, that many
" endued with abilities to promote theſe im-
" portant ends, either from timidity or indo-
" lence, neglect to ſtep forward in ſo noble a
" a cauſe; while others with ſtrong deſires,
" though of but ſmall if any ability, for pub-
" lick ſervice, vaunt into the roſtrum, and,
" confident *beyond* meaſure that they poſſeſs
'the ſpirit of adoption,' in ſome meaſure, utter
" an unintelligible jargon, or 'fluent non-
" ſenſe,' to the confounding inſtead of inform-
" ing the underſtanding of their auditories.

" Seats

"Seats in our ſynagogues, which ſhould be "filled by the wiſeſt, are too often occupied by "ſome of the weakeſt in our Iſrael. The "weak unqualified miniſters among us are ſo "many, that I really fear the good cauſe is "more prejudiced by them, than advantaged "by the few who addreſs mankind in 'words 'fitly ſpoken,' and appeal to the underſtanding "of their hearers, while they attempt to ani-"mate their beſt affections. Yet would I be "backward to diſcourage any good intention "amongſt my fellow-creatures, for whom I feel "univerſal charity; and, as I have ever adhered, "myſelf, to the freedom and approbation of "my own mind, in what I take to be a good "work, which conduct has rendered me ſupe-"rior to the efforts of miſguided zeal, under "every form which it has aſſumed, during the "ſucceſſion of near twenty years of my life; "ſo I would not be a *judge* unto others: every "weak effort of good-will, will be diſtinguiſhed "from evil.

"I enliſted early, and never turned my back "in the day of battle; and thanks be unto him "who has given me a victory, beyond what "either myſelf or my beſt friends ever ex-"pected I ſhould gain. I find the prejudices "of

" of many weakening daily; and ſome of my
" moſt formidable oppoſers give me now the
" right-hand of fellowſhip, accompanied with
" the ſalutation of peace: but I can lay my
" hand upon my heart, and ſay in the utmoſt
" ſincerity, my principal view has not been the
" *commendation* of my brethren; I perſevered
" with equal-aſſiduity when I had little hope
" of obtaining the ſanction of many.

" *Uneaſineſs* in being ſilent, and the ſecret
" ſatisfaction which attended my public labours,
" were my motive, and my reward. I wiſhed
" well to mankind, and thought it was in my
" power, according to my meaſure, to promote
" their ſpiritual welfare: I therefore became
" *uneaſy* in neglecting to attempt it. Could I
" have been influenced by a better motive?
" My conſtitution has been impaired, and my
" ſubſtance not a little diminiſhed, by my la-
" bours at home and abroad; but I am more
" than compenſated by the pleaſure which I
" feel in the preſent time, were I, as I am not,
" totally deſtitute of hope reſpecting the future.

" In the courſe of a ſhort life, few, perhaps
" very few, have had better opportunities of
" reading mankind than I have had. Moſt are
" governed

" governed by paſſion, few by principle; but all
" human power is limited by Omnipotence:
" *Thus far ſhalt thou go, and no farther*, reſpects
" the paſſions of men and the waves of the
" ſea. Wiſdom, incomprehenſible wiſdom, go-
" verns univerſal nature, and events the moſt
" irreconcileable to us are included in the plan
" of that providence, whoſe counſels are un-
" ſearchable, and whoſe ways are paſt finding
" out.

" We are to be here but a few moments
" longer; how many particles of ſand are yet
" remaining in the glaſs of life is unknown to
" us; but he that governs our exiſtence in this
" world, and ſuperintends us through it, will
" not abandon us when we quit it. He is
" omniſcient, a ſparrow falls not without his
" notice; the hairs of our heads are numbered,
" as well as the ſtars of heaven; and as LORD
" of all, the bubble of an individual's life burſts
" as agreeably to his direction as that of a
" world—and that of a world as a ſingle life.

" A GOD is every where; every atom con-
" feſſes his '*all-governing mind.*'—But again,
" we are to be here but a few moments longer;
" let us fill them up in *attempting* at leaſt '*to*
'*do*

'*do good*;' the very *attempt* will be accepted by " him who knows the intentions of the heart! " Without enquiring whether *many*, or but *few* " will be ſaved, let us endeavour, let us do all we " can, to ſave all—pray for the ſalvation of all, " and leave the reſt to him who will ultimately " deal with all according to the perfection of " his own wiſdom, which our fooliſhneſs can- " not comprehend.

" My dear friend, I feel a moſt fraternal af- " fection for thee, and wiſh thy proſperity in the " bleſſed and unalterable truth! Cheriſh the " humbling benevolent feelings which thou art " often favoured with; approach the altar in " brokenneſs of ſpirit; but leave not thy un- " derſtanding at the threſhold of the ſanctuary: " for the all-ſeeing GOD requires not that his " creatures ſhould approach him without, but " with, their underſtandings—in order that they " may offer unto him *a reaſonable*, which is the " only acceptable, ſacrifice. In malice continue " to be a child, but in underſtanding be a man. " Much I have ſaid—much ſtill I have to ſay— " but I muſt draw toward a concluſion for this " time. I have prayed—I do ſtill pray for thee " —that thou mayſt be delivered from, and " brought through every difficulty. Set up

" thy

" thy banner in the name of the LORD, and in " that name thou ſhalt go forward unto vic- " tory. Farewel."

The man who teaches in any art or ſcience, from thoſe experimental principles which he himſelf has tried, and proved to be true, will juſtly claim our fulleſt confidence and aſſent. Now religion (which to every ſincere man admits the moſt ſatisfactory evidence from experiment) is a ſubject on which the ſincere experimental teacher ſhould be heard with attention, and regarded with ſerioufneſs. And in this important province, few men have had a greater right to be heard and regarded, than Thomas Letchworth.

In teaching, from his own experience of the power and excellency of chriſtian precepts, doctrines, and feelings, he was ever ſerious, fervent, and ſincere: he ſpoke not of things which he had merely learned in theory, but of things *which he had heard with his ears, which he had ſeen and known, and his hands had handled, of the word of life.* Hence it was that he miniſtred of the goſpel of CHRIST, among his fellow-beings, with an earneſtneſs which gave him the diſtinction of a ſervant for CHRIST's ſake, and

and procured him the reward of divine peace an hundred-fold in this world—and for a world to come, the better hope of life everlaſting.

Hence alſo he was known often to expreſs himſelf with much thankfulneſs, on the comfort and animation which attended him in the progreſs of his publick labours. It may be juſtly ſaid of him, that he drew the abundant balance of all his trials and difficulties from that ſource. "I love," he would ſay, "the "goſpel, and the labour of it, as my meat and "drink:—In the world we have tribulation "and perpetual cauſe of anxiety; but I dearly "love to get out of its ſpirit, and to preach the "truths of another kingdom and another world. "No pleaſure, to me, is equal to that; my "mind, in the goſpel employment, is ſo com-"forted and covered with divine good—and I "feel, then, ſuch an happy abſence of the evil "propenſities of human nature, that my ſoul "rejoices in the cauſe wherein I am engaged."

Moreover, he uſed to ſay, he had often obſerved one thing, which was, that when his apparent difficulties in worldly concerns were the greateſt, his taſte of ſpiritual conſolation was always the moſt ſweet—and that when walking

walking the ſtreets of London, amidſt the hurry and anxiety of the multitude, which ſeemed ſo buſied about the "many things," he could ſometimes hardly refrain from lifting up his voice among them, on the theme of ſalvation and eternal life:—and during his latter years, his conſolation ſeemed to be, that his mind was more favoured than formerly with the evidences and ſatisfactions of divinity.

This little volume hath been thus lengthened out a conſiderable number of pages further than I had at firſt an idea of; and yet I am willing to hope the matter which hath been introduced will not be deemed by thoſe who loved the deceaſed, or who are lovers of a worthy and chriſtian character, as either unimportant or ſuperfluous.

We muſt now, in the order of time and of events, approach to that part of the detail, that cannot fail to excite a renewal of thoſe feelings, which it is neceſſary a biographer ſhould have, in drawing the laſt ſcene of ſuch a ſubject as this, if he would render his narrative properly affecting, and happily ſubſervient to the cauſe of virtue.

Much

Much more might have been truly ſaid of the talents, and anecdotes might have been increaſed, of a man, who had ſo few rivals in underſtanding, and whoſe life was a life of intereſting ſtudy, and moſt benevolent, free, and eloquent communication. But if enough has been already ſaid to mark out thoſe amiable features of character, which were ſo truly his own, and to give the proper teſtimony which the occaſion ſeemed to require, in favour of an eminently ſerviceable goſpel miniſter, we will turn our attention towards that ſeaſon of *decline*, which, as it came upon him, muſt inevitably come upon every work of human excellence!

About the beginning of the year 1784, he made a weſtern excurſion with one of his intimate acquaintance; after ſpending a few days in Bath, where he then paid his laſt viſit to his friends, he returned again to London. I expected in vain to hear from him for ſeveral weeks after his return, and was at length caſually informed that he had been taken ill on his journey; but his complaint I could not fully learn. Soon after, he wrote me a letter, ſtating ſome particulars of his caſe, which proved to be the meſſage of mortality. He had been ſenſible, on the road to town, of ſtrong ſymptoms

toms of the approaching calamity; but in their progreſs, after his arrival at his own houſe near Wandſworth, they became extremely painful and afflictive: inſomuch that in his letter, written after he had received relief from inciſion, he thus feelingly expreſſed himſelf:—

"I had a conſtant and inexpreſſible pain, and "Dr. ****** pronounced that a fiſtula was "forming. Applications were ineffectually "made, the inflammation increaſed, and my "pain with it, which was aggravated by a total "ſuppreſſion of urine. In this dilemma I "knew not what to do, nor my friends what "to do for me; but I reſigned my mind up to "ſuffering; this I did without repining, or "any fear of the iſſue—having an unſhaken "confidence in the common GOD and Father "of us all, that he would not afflict me more "than was meet; yet I could not help groaning for hours together, being incapable of "changing my poſition: whenever that became neceſſary, the friendly aſſiſtant hands "employed about me put me into an agony "which I could not ſuſtain, without crying out "for very anguiſh. But in the midſt of all "this, I was enabled to call out, alſo, in the "fervency of devotion.

"This

"This was the ſubſtance of the prayer and "confidence of my mind:—

"O LORD, my GOD, who afflicteſt not "willingly the children of men, I ſubmit to "thy will, I adore thy wiſdom; whatever thou "doeſt is right, and muſt terminate in the good "of thy creatures: Endue me with patience; "if thou kill me, I will truſt in thee; if thou "lead me into the valley of the ſhadow of "death, I will fear no evil, for thou art with "me; thou art my protector and everlaſting "friend: though my fleſh and my heart fail, "yet thou art the ſtrength of my heart, and my "portion for ever."

In another part of the ſame letter, after having expreſſed ſome hopes of the reſtoration of his former ſtrength, and of again getting abroad among his friends, he corrects himſelf in the following reſigned and chriſtian language—a language which the event ſoon proved to be beautifully adapted to his allotment.

"But I am content in the will of GOD, to "ſuffer pain, or enjoy pleaſure; to live, or to "die, as it may pleaſe him; his will be done. "—I have found abundant conſolation in this

" ſuffering ſeaſon, from the moral, metaphyſi-
" cal, and religious principles which I have
" received, and have been much broken under
" a ſenſe of the divine goodneſs, and in the
" contemplation of the glorious ſcheme of the
" divine providence, to whom appertaineth all
" power, and dominion, and glory. Let all
" that hath breath praiſe the LORD!"

The letter from which the foregoing paragraphs are taken, was written in the fifth month; ſoon after that time he removed from his own houſe on Wandſworth common, to a lodging at Walworth, that he might be nearer his medical friends in London; ſeveral of whom attended him from motives of affectionate regard, and with much ſolicitude about his recovery; but thoſe attentions were ſoon conſidered by them, and moſt other obſervers of his declining health, as unavailing: he grew by degrees weaker and weaker; and the debility which his conſtitution (far from being naturally robuſt) had received through the ardent exerciſe of his gift in the miniſtry, during a ſeries of ſo many years, was ſuppoſed to be a cauſe now particularly felt in haſtening his diſſolution.

After

After a continuance of ſome weeks at Walworth, in which his diſorder made a ſlow but continual progreſs, he formed a reſolution of going ſuddenly in a carriage to the houſe of his old acquaintance and friend Joſeph Rand of Newbury.

This remove ſeems to have been the reſult of an apprehenſion, which he ſometimes had, but which was not yet the uniform perſuaſion of his mind, that his laſt moments were approaching—and it is moſt probable that he wiſhed to be in a ſituation the moſt retired, in a ſeaſon of ſuch ſerious uncertainty.

He bore his journey with leſs fatigue than might have been expected; and in his paſſage through Reading, took the opportunity of viewing the burial-ground belonging to his friends there, expreſſing at the ſame time his deſire that his remains might be depoſited in that ſpot, ſhould it pleaſe divine providence not to permit his return again to his own habitation.

On entering the houſe of his friend at Newbury, he appeared to be in a calm but cheerful ſtate of mind; and before he could be prevailed on to ſit down, told the family that if it were

the will of providence to appoint that illneſs for his final change, he was come to die with them; that he had ſurveyed the ſpot where his grave might be, and found himſelf much reſigned, and at eaſe.

In this ſituation he ſurvived about three months, gradually declining towards "the "houſe appointed for all living;" and though in much bodily weakneſs, had very little pain.

During the ſeaſon of this ſolemnity (for ſuch it was both to himſelf and thoſe around him) he frequently expreſſed, in a manner that might be expected in the cloſe of ſuch a life, his firm and comfortable reliance on that divine goodneſs, which he had ſo uniformly delighted to contemplate and adore.

It has been an obſervation frequently made, and ſhould not fail to excite a ſuitable humiliation of mind, that men of the brighteſt talents ſometimes exhibit the ſtrongeſt proofs of the decay of the rational faculties, and other tokens of mental infirmity towards the cloſe of this frail exiſtence.

This

This remark may be ſaid not to have been altogether inapplicable to him, the evening of whoſe life we are now conſidering. But, perhaps, with regard to him, as well as many others of diſtinguiſhed abilities, ſuch an alteration may be the more obſervable, by how much the more brightly their unimpaired faculties had exceeded the general allotment of mankind. And the ſame degree of weakneſs, which muſt appear remarkable in ſuch men, may paſs unobſerved in others, concerning whom a contraſt with former excellencies cannot be made.

But with regard to this our memorable friend, it muſt afford my readers, and thoſe eſpecially who loved him as I have done, an high degree of pleaſure to be aſſured, that whatever were the momentary effects of diſeaſe, and of bodily ſtrength ſo greatly exhauſted as his was, his moments of calm, compoſed, and moſt happy enjoyment, were apparently the frequent and rewarding preſages of a bleſſed immortality!

And, indeed, when his mind appeared to be moſt affected with his weakneſs, it had more the appearance of a temporary nervous affection, than any ſettled alteration in his underſtanding—for it was obſervable in the general, even

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to

to his laſt day, that he poſſeſſed the powers of a moſt ſenſible recollection; and would reaſon on ſubjects of the firſt importance, with as much clearneſs and pertinence, as ever he had been known to do in the days of his greateſt vigour and activity.

During the latter part of his illneſs, he rather choſe to partake of an epiſtolary, than a perſonal intercourſe with his particular friends; and wrote with his own hand, ſeveral affectionate letters, in return for their tender enquiries and concern; one of which, to his valued friend Robert Barclay of Clapham, which probably was his laſt, I have now before me;—and the extract which I ſhall make from it, will at leaſt be no unintereſting picture of the laſt ſtage of a virtuous and ſympathetic friendſhip.

"We have been acquainted ſeveral years—
"our friendſhip has been mutual and conſtant,
"through varied ſcenes of life. And though
"our ſocial perſonal interviews have not been
"very frequent, we always met with alacrity,
"and parted with reluctance; but thoſe days
"are over; thoſe ſeaſons of friendly and convi-
"vial enjoyment are no more! We have been
"long ſeparated by illneſs;—we have both had
"no

"no ſmall portion of the wormwood and the "gall; and I hope we have learned, in the "ſchool of affliction, *how frail we are.* It gives "me pleaſure to hear that thou haſt recovered "thy health—I wiſh thou may'ſt long enjoy it. "As to me, the meaſure of my calamity is not "yet filled up. But I complain not of the "diſpenſations of unerring wiſdom and good-"neſs:—they may, they muſt be, right. I en-"deavour at leaſt to bear my no light affliction, "in all humility, patience, and reſignation; "waiting the iſſue of the preſent diſpenſation, "which I could neither foreſee nor prevent.

"Safe in the hands of one diſpoſing power,
"Or in the natal, or the mortal hour."

For a conſiderable time before his departure, he was obſerved to ſleep little; but his frequent account of his feelings was, that he had no pain, and that the ſilence of the night was particularly pleaſant to him.

When his friends enquired of him in the morning how he had reſted? the ſubſtance of his anſwer repeatedly was, that though he had had but little ſleep, he was eaſy and refreſhed without it: "I enjoy," he would ſay, "ſuch "comfortable

" comfortable nights, that I cannot deſcribe my " feelings—my mind is ſo filled with inexpreſ- " ſible ſweetneſs and ſolemnity!"

At other times he would appear to be thoughtful about the enquiries which his diſtant friends might make, concerning the general ſtate of his mind, and his particular views of the change that was approaching. On this head he more than once calmly remarked, that he had no particular *viſions*, or *raptures* to ſpeak of; but a firm unſhaken reliance on the divine attributes, that his allotment would be according to infinite wiſdom and mercy; and in that he was abundantly ſatisfied.

About a month before his deceaſe, on a firſt day morning, finding himſelf more than uſually revived, he expreſſed a deſire to go with the family to meeting—which he had not been able to do for near a year before: on entering the meeting-houſe, he became exceedingly affected with the thought of being once more in a place appointed for the publick worſhip of that Being, who was the author of all his mercies; and in much brokenneſs of ſpirit he ſat down and wept. After ſitting a ſhort time, and becoming more compoſed and ſtrengthened, he kneeled down,

down, and for the laſt time in publick, fervently ſupplicated before the throne, at which he had ſo often reverenced, and been favoured with acceſs!

After that, he was alſo enabled to ſtand up, and bear among his friends his laſt publick teſtimony to the ſufficiency of that power from on high, which ſuſtains the impotence of man through every diſpenſation of weakneſs and affliction; ſetting forth in a moſt lively and affecting manner, that affliction was the true mirror in which man might profitably ſee himſelf; and commending his hearers to that reverent remembrance of the Supreme Being, and that life of faith in his providence, which ſhould keep them under the divine notice and bleſſing, when time ſhould be no more—he cloſed a teſtimony, and an exhortation, which greatly affected the audience.

In this ſolemn manner ended the publick labours of this gifted and great man!

Early in the morning of the ſeventh day of the eleventh month, he was ſeized with convulſive pains in his ſtomach and bowels; and the family being alarmed at this ſudden alteration, aroſe and became ſpectators of a ſhort ſcene of corporeal diſtreſs, which, how-

ever, ſeemed to have but little effect on the ſolemn and peaceful ſtate of his mind.

Some of his laſt expreſſions were addreſſed to his kind friend, the wife of Joſeph Rand—upon whom he fixed his eyes, as in a pious ejaculation, mixed with grateful affection for her concern on his account, and ſaid, "I have often "had cauſe to call on the Supreme Being for his "mercy—and I do now call upon him under a "ſenſe of that mercy." Then ſtretching himſelf forth in his bed, he received, and ſeemed to return, the ſalute of his affectionate wife, (who, through the whole of his affliction, had waited upon him with an exemplary care and tenderneſs) and ſerenely paſſed into eternity, about the tenth hour in the morning.

Thus lived, thus thought, and thus moſt happily departed out of this world, the diſtinguiſhed, admired, and no leſs beloved, Thomas Letchworth; aged about forty-ſix years, and who, during upwards of twenty-ſix of thoſe years had been an eminent miniſter of the goſpel of JESUS. Seven days after his deceaſe, in conformity with his own requeſt, his remains were carried to Reading, and there interred among thoſe of his departed friends, after a large publick meeting had been held on the occaſion.

Many of his old acquaintance from London and other parts attended his funeral, from motives of that tender affection, which is ever due to the memory of the wiſe, the uſeful, and the good.

To ſum up the character of this extraordinary man in a few words:——

He was one who ſeemed born for the inſtruction, the reformation, and the delight, of civil and religious ſociety. In him were united the moſt lively abilities—the moſt ardent thirſt of enquiry into moral ſcience—the moſt acute penetration into the characteriſtics of the human mind—and the moſt genuine love of natural, political, and religious freedom.

His underſtanding was quick, piercing, and comprehenſive, beyond that of the generality of ſenſible men. The exerciſe of that underſtanding was directed to thoſe intellectual ſubjects, which, to reaſonable beings, will ever be found in the firſt ranks of importance. He read, as a ſtudent, in the more abſtruſe and curious departments of enquiry—becauſe he liked new arrangements of ideas, and the tranquility of a kind of literary converſation. But what the greater part of men, the moſt remarkable for acquired talents, are accuſtomed to reap from

from laborious ſtudy and gradual reflection, he ſeemed to have the powe of equalling, if not ſurpaſſing, from the ſpontaneo is dictates of nature. And, as he was of a diſpoſition the moſt open, affable, and communicative, he commonly excelled and delighted, by a moſt accurate and luminous diſplay of whatever he undertook to explain.

With ſuch ſhining abilities from nature, and with the conſequent admiration which thoſe abilities could not fail to procure, he was an eminent inſtance of that philoſophic and chriſtian humility, that cheriſhes a governing ſenſe of the little which man can know, in compariſon of the infinite knowledge that lies beyond his reach! But humbly confiding in the glorious doctrines of revelation, and animated by a love of virtue, and the ſatisfactory evidences of immortality and eternal life, he dedicated the powers of his mind to the promulgation of thoſe truths, among his fellow-beings, with the warmeſt and moſt diſintereſted affection—and left no doubt of his own acceptance into the joy of his LORD, and into his maſter's reſt.

FINIS

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